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56th plenary meeting
Friday, 16 November 2001, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda of the fifty-sixth regular session of the General Assembly, organization of work and allocation of items

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/56/250/Add.3)

The President: In its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that sub-item (f) of agenda item 21, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", also be allocated to the Sixth Committee, for the sole purpose of considering the question of the granting of observer status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to also allocate to the Sixth Committee sub-item (f) of agenda item 21, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", for the sole purpose of considering the question of the granting of observer status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Philippe Antonio, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti.

Mr. Antonio (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the President of the Republic of Haiti and of the Haitian delegation, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. You may rest assured of the full support of the Haitian delegation as you carry out your functions.

I should also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, on the efficacy and talent he displayed in conducting the work of the Millennium Assembly.

Allow me furthermore to offer my warmest congratulations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to the Organization on their receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Above and beyond any other consideration, this reflects recognition of the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Organization to promote peace and development.

I also take this opportunity to convey, on behalf of the people and Government of Haiti, our sincere condolences to the bereaved families, and in particular to the Government and brotherly people of the Dominican Republic, following the tragic aeroplane accident in Queens, New York, on 12 November.

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The Government of the Republic of Haiti firmly condemns the hateful acts carried out on 11 September in Manhattan, New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, which claimed thousands of victims. On this occasion, the Government offers its solidarity to the American people and Government and its support in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever it may occur and whomever its perpetrators, victims and promoters may be. These inhuman and blind acts, while eliciting grief and despair, attack the very underpinnings of the democratic system and do violence to international peace and security, freedom, human rights and the search for well-being and prosperity.

The international community already has at its disposal 10 conventions, complemented by two protocols, addressing terrorism in its various manifestations, not to mention two additional initiatives under consideration on the issue. The international legal instruments were recently strengthened by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which provides the major guidelines for our common struggle. We all stand to gain by adhering to international legality. In that vein, the Haitian Government, notwithstanding its meagre resources, is committed to taking the measures necessary to ratify and implement these relevant legal instruments.

These legal instruments are indispensable to our common struggle against this scourge, to be sure, but it is also of the utmost importance that we begin to consider the social, economic, political and other factors that might spawn terrorism. The international community, under the auspices of the United Nations and the banner of tolerance and solidarity, must build a grand coalition against poverty, ignorance, want, hunger, social exclusion and marginalization. That task is more urgent now than ever.

It is time for the members of the international community to reach a consensus on Security Council reform. It is necessary to increase the number of the Council's permanent members on the basis of better geographic distribution. We must undertake an in-depth re-evaluation of the right of veto, the current form of which is barely relevant to international relations and the exigencies of the democratic imperative. We must also institutionalize transparency in the Council's working methods and procedures. The achievement of these goals will make the Organization more effective and strengthen its legitimacy and authority.

The Republic of Haiti urges States and peoples in conflict, especially in the Middle East, to embrace dialogue in order to find lasting peace.

Today, in a world led by financial markets, trade exchanges and investments of unprecedented scope, a number of developing countries are being marginalized from world economic developments. We must refashion cooperation for development if we wish to reverse their slide into marginalization and extreme poverty. We must, in partnership with the international community and all the actors concerned, revise our strategies and propose a common approach that will tackle the problem of inequality during the new millennium.

Thus, we are afforded the opportunity to implement all the commitments undertaken by our heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit. More than 147 heads of State and Government solemnly committed themselves to deliver humanity from want, and to make the right to development a reality for all. It is incumbent on us to translate these commitments into concrete deeds.

The benefits of trade for development are recognized, but it is perhaps still necessary to ask ourselves if in the context of globalization the least developed countries do not find themselves in a dilemma. How can we seriously speak of free trade with countries that, for the most part, have little to trade. It is also necessary to increase their production and export capacities.

It is essential that these countries have access to markets where they can sell their products. There is the "Everything but arms" initiative of the European Commission, which we welcome, and we invite our developing country partners to do the same.

The Haitian Government welcomes the holding of the Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place during the first quarter of 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico. That Conference gives us the opportunity to formulate recommendations on the reorientation of cooperation for development, in particular concrete measures in the area of debt management, technological cooperation, trade, investment and the international financial system. The Haitian Government also welcomes the organizing of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place next September in Johannesburg, and invites its partners to accept this concept of

partnership, in which the interlocutors hold dialogues as equals in a framework of mutual respect.

My Government reaffirms its faith in a democratic future for Haiti, and, out of conviction, will do everything necessary to consolidate and strengthen the rule of law. Democracy will thus remain one of the pillars of the Haitian Government's policies.

Haiti is now undergoing a crisis situation, which is the result of an electoral controversy. In fact, after the elections of 21 May 2000 for the reconstitution of the Chamber of Deputies, more than two thirds of the Senate and all of our local offices, the electoral observer mission of the Organization of American States (OAS), while acknowledging in a report that the elections took place in an acceptable and credible way, still uncovered certain irregularities in the way that the absolute majority required for the election of the eight candidates to the Senate had been calculated. What followed was the suspension of international assistance, the resumption of which is still conditional on resolving the post-electoral crisis.

As soon as he was elected, and even before his inauguration, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide committed himself to the path of dialogue, convinced that opposition is necessary for the proper functioning of institutions. It was in this context that President Aristide's eight-point letter of December 2000 was sent to the then President of the United States, Mr. William Jefferson Clinton. In fact, in his search for a negotiated solution, President Aristide encouraged initiatives on the part of sectors of civil society.

In addition, during the participation of the Haitian delegation at the Quebec Summit, where the member States of the OAS took note of the efforts made by the Government, our head of State reiterated once again his determination to find a negotiated solution to the crisis in Haiti.

Once again, in Costa Rica, during the twenty-first session of the OAS General Assembly in June 2001, President Aristide, in a letter to the President of the Assembly made proposals that were incorporated into a resolution adopted by the 34 members of the organization as recommendations for crisis resolution. Since then, the head of State and the Government of Haiti have done everything possible to effectively implement these recommendations.

The Haitian Government and the political organization Fanmi Lavalas, with a mediation role played the OAS general secretariat, have begun negotiations with Democratic Convergence, a political opposition group, with a view to reaching an agreement in the framework of the commitments made in Costa Rica.

During those negotiations, various proposals have been put forward, particularly: the resignation of the seven senators concerned in the OAS report; the shortening by two years of the term of office of all deputies; the shortening of the term of office of the senators elected on 21 May 2000; the putting together of a future provisional electoral council; the holding in November 2002 of early elections for all of the members of parliament involved in the points that I have just mentioned; and the holding of elections during the first quarter of 2003 for the local offices whose terms will expire in November 2003.

President Aristide, the Government and the Fanmi Lavalas party have demonstrated much flexibility in the framework of negotiations. Unfortunately, the Convergence remains intransigent and challenges the wording of the two last points, on the holding of elections. The Convergence is frozen in its position, called "option zero", which consists in simply annulling the elections of 21 May 2000. Thus, the impasse still exists; international assistance is still suspended.

Meanwhile, poverty rages in Haiti. The AIDS pandemic, having claimed 260,000 victims, means a loss in terms of the life expectancy of our population, which had been painstakingly increased. Maternal and infant mortality is clearly progressing. The figure of 500 out of 100,000 dying in childbirth and the infant mortality rate, which has risen to 61 out of every 1,000 births, remain very alarming. Given that children, women and men — an entire population — are dying for lack of means, of financial resources, would it be an exaggeration to speak of another form of economic terrorism that none dare reveal?

Can one justify the link between a contested method of tallying votes and the freeze on financing given to my country in the form of loans — loans on which we continue, despite everything, to pay interest — especially since we know that the legislative and local elections of 21 May 2000 were held to fill 7,500 vacant posts, that 29,000 candidates took part in

these elections, and that voter participation of 60 per cent was the highest since 1990?

The Republic of Haiti remains confident of its destiny. It appeals to the international community so that its members will understand that the survival of the people cannot be tied only to political manoeuvres. The Haitian Government is committed to a process of strengthening institutions and remains open to dialogue and all proposals that do not undermine the dignity of the Haitian people. Against this background, we welcome with satisfaction the letter of the Black Caucus of the United States Congress, of 9 November 2001, addressed to the current President of the United States, Mr. George W. Bush, which denounces the inflexible policies vis-à-vis Haiti that make economic cooperation dependent on unblocking the political process.

The Government is ready to do everything in its power to resolve the post-election crisis and put the country back on the path of development, but this cannot be done without the cooperation of the international community. To this end, it invites this community to join it in its daily struggle for survival, reconciliation and peace.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This session of the General Assembly is taking place in the shadow of an unprecedented challenge to humanity posed by international terrorism. We all must seriously analyse how this could have happened. However, it has already become perfectly clear today that the period of globalization and the threats and challenges to international and regional security that it brings with it make it urgent for of all of us to take fundamentally new approaches to international affairs.

We face a tough dilemma, whose solution will truly be of paramount importance. Either we work together to responsibly construct a genuinely just and democratic world order that can guarantee equal security and sustainable development for all States in the world, or we show ourselves to be unable to counter real threats to global stability and security.

The most important task of the international community today is to create a global system to counteract new threats and challenges, first and foremost among which is international terrorism. This topic was the focus of negotiations between the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, and the President of the United States of America, Mr. George W. Bush, which recently took place in Washington, D.C. and Crawford, Texas.

A universal anti-terrorist coalition has been formed. The Russian Federation is a responsible participant in this coalition. The creation of this coalition has involved the United Nations playing a very important role in consolidating and coordinating activities. It is precisely the United Nations that has the necessary universal character and authority to organize a response to the threats and challenges that confront mankind today.

The broad decisions taken by the Security Council and the General Assembly create a solid political and legal framework for efforts to neutralize the threat of terrorism. It is now important for these decisions to be implemented by all States.

If necessary, the use of the most decisive means against terrorists may be permissible, including the use of military force. The Charter grants that right. At the same time, this threat cannot be overcome by force alone. A comprehensive approach to eradicating terrorism would imply the use of the whole range of political, economic, financial and humanitarian measures.

The consolidation of the international legal framework for combating terrorism is now on our agenda. It is extremely important to rapidly complete and adopt the comprehensive convention on international terrorism and a convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.

It would be of great importance to establish within the United Nations a mechanism to monitor the fulfilment by States of their treaty obligations concerning the suppression of terrorism.

We consider promising the idea to establish, under the aegis of the United Nations, a centre for coordinating assistance to States to resolve crises caused by terrorist acts. Such a structure could focus on providing consultative and material and technical support in managing the consequences of terrorist acts.

The Russian Federation also proposes studying the possibility of including in international law the

principle of the responsibility of States for their failure to take measures against terrorists in their territory or under their jurisdiction.

Of key importance in the success of the comprehensive fight against international terrorism is the maintenance and strengthening of strategic stability at both global and regional levels and strengthening the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The focus of the international community should continue to be on the interdependence and merging of international terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. The Russian Federation favours the rapid entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional protocols.

It is perfectly clear that the fight against terrorism is not aimed at any particular religion, civilization or culture. This was clearly demonstrated by the discussions on the dialogue among civilizations during the current session of the General Assembly. We also hope that a practical contribution in this area can be made by the implementation of the initiative put forward by Islamic religious leaders from the Russian Federation to organize an international conference entitled "Islam against terrorism" in Moscow.

Terrorism is rooted in the gap between affluence and poverty, both within States and in the international arena. Thus, the task now, as never before, is to ensure sustainable development throughout the world and to ensure that the social aspects of the globalization process are addressed.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies can do a lot to ensure effective rejection of extremism of all forms. We suggest that thought should be given to organizing, under the aegis of the United Nations, a world forum that would discuss what contribution civil society and, particularly, the mass media could make to combating terrorism.

International experience has shown that successful prevention and settlement of regional conflicts are an integral part of the counter-terrorist efforts of the international community. This is yet another compelling argument in favour of further developing and ensuring greater effectiveness of United Nations preventive and peacekeeping activities. In particular, the Russian Federation advocates the development within the United Nations of a comprehensive strategy aimed at reliably blocking channels for outside fuelling of the conflicts.

We need to ensure that there is regional cooperation in fighting these new threats. An example of such successful cooperation is that of the Commonwealth of Independent States, under the auspices of which a CIS anti-terrorist centre has been set up and is working effectively.

Today, the moment of truth has arrived for each of us. The Russian Federation is in favour of the international community taking decisions that can provide for strategic stability and equal security for all States, sustainable development and prosperity for all the peoples of the planet and peace and tranquillity for each family and each individual.

These noble aims can only be achieved jointly, by working cooperatively and uniting the efforts of the entire international community. The United Nations has a vital role to play in this regard. Our Organization was, and indeed remains, the most important instrument available to the international community, whose effective and responsible use will allow us to create a new democratic and just world order for the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Patrice Trovoada, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Community of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Trovoada (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on behalf of the State of Sao Tome and myself on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, which testifies to the international community's esteem for and recognition of the Republic of Korea and you personally. Please accept our wishes for every success as you carry out your mandate. Let me also express our thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the exemplary way he led the work of our last session.

I should also like to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, both on his resounding re-election and on the well-deserved and just awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and the

United Nations, reflecting their major contributions to the cause of peace and development.

This session is being held at a particularly important juncture in the history of international relations, when the entire international community is mobilizing to confront the devastating phenomenon of international terrorism, the scope and magnitude of which were evident in the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., and in Pennsylvania, which took the lives of thousands of innocent people. At that time, Sao Tome and Principe expressed its total indignation at the criminal and monstrous acts committed against the American people, as well as its full solidarity with the American authorities and the families of the victims. We share the opinion that those responsible for these barbaric acts must be apprehended and punished, and that terrorist organizations supporting them must be dismantled by all necessary means.

We reaffirm our full readiness to cooperate actively at both the regional and international levels in the fight against terrorism, which is one of the major evils threatening world peace and security today. We hail all initiatives taken to contain the military action, justly launched against those who sow terror as well as those who shelter them in their territories, so as to avoid having innocent victims among the civilian population. We welcome the efforts of the international community to adopt a juridical instrument to make the fight against terrorism more effective in the context of a global strategy.

No one can doubt that this act of criminal, unacceptable and unjustified aggression, condemned throughout the world, requires a new dynamic in the fight against it, particularly within the United Nations. We note with satisfaction that important measures have been taken in that regard, notably by the Security Council in resolution 1373 (2001), of 28 September. Yet the manifestation of extreme violence in these recent attacks alerts us to the need to understand in a different and comprehensive way the great problems faced by mankind throughout the world, without losing sight of the merciless fight that must be waged against international terrorism in all its manifestations.

Despite the considerable scientific and technological progress recorded throughout history, which has permitted high levels of development, striking imbalances persist in a number of areas with regard to social and economic development, both within and among the countries, regions and subregions of the world. Witness particularly the situation prevailing in sub-Saharan Africa. A look at the statistics of economic and social conditions in the countries of that region is enough to reveal the urgent need to develop a front that, acting concertedly and collectively, can fight to eradicate their absolute poverty.

Faced with this scenario — rich countries on the one hand and poor countries on the other — one might wonder whether the political will exists to reverse this situation, which is dominated by selfishness and the interests of individuals, groups and States. Only thus can one explain the lack of cooperation, indifference and, indeed, the lack of sensitivity shown by the industries of developed countries in the face of real scourges that devastate thousands of people, making the countries of the South even more vulnerable. For example, I am thinking of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as other epidemics, such as hepatitis B and malaria.

The efforts of international organizations — notably the United Nations and its system, as well as certain non-governmental organizations — to help mankind cope with this painful situation must be visible.

Moreover, beyond the economic data reflecting the growth of poverty in Africa, the situation of our continent is worsened by the persistence of armed conflicts, particularly the crises in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and Angola, to cite only a few examples of the fratricidal war that afflicts us.

As to the situation in Angola, we reaffirm our urgent desire to see an end to the war in that fraternal country. We condemn the terrorist acts that have claimed countless lives, particularly among the civilian population, and we call for a renewed application of the terms of the Lusaka Protocol for conflict resolution.

In the context of conflict resolution, we welcome the efforts of the international community to find a solution to the East Timor question, as well as progress made in the process of emancipation of the Maubere people under the aegis of the United Nations. It is our great hope to see this brotherly people admitted to the United Nations as a full-fledged Member and to see a strengthened Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

We note with concern the escalation of violence in the Middle East. In our view, it is essential that Israel and the Palestinian Authority resume the negotiations on the peace process, the only way to find a just and peaceful solution that takes into account both the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the guarantee of security for the State of Israel.

Unfortunately, Sao Tome and Principe is still on the list of poor, least advanced or underdeveloped countries, despite the efforts of its people and the determination of its leaders to place it on the track of development. Today, my country is unquestionably a place of freedom and democracy where fundamental individual human rights are respected. The recent presidential elections, held in July this year, which brought Mr. Fradique de Menezes to the highest office of the State of Sao Tome, are irrefutable proof of democratic stability in our country. Nevertheless, the constraints arising from the inequalities that prevail in the new international economic order keep us from attaining a state of well-being and from creating more dignified living conditions for our people.

During the Millennium Summit last year, the heads of State and Government adopted in this Hall a very important text called the United Nations Millennium Declaration. I take pleasure in citing a portion of it:

(*spoke in French*)

> "we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs". (*resolution 55/2, para. 2*)

(*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*)

This Declaration takes on particular importance in the case of our country, where the future and well-being of children seem badly compromised, bearing in mind the atmosphere of terror, the horrors of war and the abuses of exploitation, famine and poverty. We must act now to protect our children. We must fight by every available means to ensure full respect for their fundamental rights. This is why we welcome with much satisfaction the Second World Conference against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, scheduled for next month, and the world summit on the future of children, to be held in May 2002.

Sao Tome and Principe considers globalization to be a phenomenon of interdependence, a unique opportunity to bring peoples together, not a political ideal driven by the dominant economic Powers. Thus we enthusiastically welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development and share the certainty that this plan — based on our needs and the aspirations of our people for the future, and designed to find practical solutions to the economic and social problems throughout Africa — will be favourably received by our partners, notably those of the G-7/G-8, for implementation.

The environment is a fundamental issue for the survival of mankind, and it must continue to be the focus of special attention by the United Nations. We therefore stress the importance of the outcome of the recent seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held at Marrakesh. Every effort must be made to create and disseminate technology that can minimize the environmental impact of human activities and to mobilize the resources needed to implement the policies and strategies adopted in a range of international forums.

Today more than ever before, it is obvious that we need to change the working methods of the organs of the United Nations so that they can better respond to the demands of the day. As a universal organization, the United Nations must be open to all States. Here we are talking about international law, the sovereign conduct of relations with other States, and active participation, in a spirit of solidarity, in development efforts through cooperation and international trade relationships. That certainly applies to the Republic of China on Taiwan. We believe in the right to disagree, especially when disagreement is democratically expressed by people. We also believe that dialogue is the only way to ease tension wherever it is most acute.

The United Nations, which has always aimed to support the development efforts of all countries, especially the poorest, must play a key role in the quest for solutions to the major problems facing the world. It must do so through fostering determination and adopting appropriate measures to create a fairer, more human world: a better world.

Address by Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Macapagal-Arroyo: Let me begin by congratulating Your Excellency, Mr. Han Seung-soo, on your election as President of the General Assembly. I am especially gratified to be addressing the Assembly when a distinguished Asian is again at its helm.

I congratulate as well His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on the Nobel Prize that he, together with the United Nations, has received. That prize constitutes recognition by the international community of the indispensable role of the United Nations and of the necessary work it has done on the Secretary-General's watch towards world peace and justice.

At the most elemental level, we feel most deeply the sad and tragic impact of the recent inhuman acts of terrorism: the lost lives, the orphaned children, the widowed spouses, the parents struck with the unimaginable grief of outliving their children and, worse yet, of watching them die. As we watched the horror unfold, we felt as though it were happening to us — as indeed it was, for the United Nations is in a sense one family. The blow that was struck at this international city of New York was felt as directly by the rest of the world. As people the world over stopped to watch in horror as the twin towers came down, the world's economies ground to a virtual halt.

Business activity stopped, investments were withdrawn, markets shrank, tourism dried up, more jobs were lost, living standards dropped even further, destitution spread and the very conditions that favour terrorism spread and deepened. Our misgivings about a world slowdown deepened into certainty about a recession that will be felt most deeply by those least able to endure it: not just classes but whole countries. The average growth rate in the gross domestic product of developing countries could fall from last year's 5.5 per cent to 2.9 per cent. For most poor countries, that will translate to sub-zero growth.

The face of terrorism that this city saw over a month ago is a familiar one to Asians. It has taken a terrible toll in terms of the lives of our people and the economies of the region. It has destroyed our credit and has deterred investment. It has caused Asian Governments profound embarrassment at being caught flat-footed and unable to offer their citizens the most basic security. In the south-western part of the Philippines, it has taxed our resources and our patience to the limit, for terrorism is the argument of those who are not really interested in reasoning but only in getting whatever they want on their terms alone.

We know terrorism. We are fighting it in the south-western Philippines. The perpetrators of the first attack on the World Trade Center were apprehended by our police. Rather than dismembering our country and dispossessing our people of their homes, we have been negotiating with secessionist groups. But we have thrown the full weight of the law, including the use of force, at those who have resorted to terrorism. We know the enemy, and we know that these are not people you talk to; these are people you fight. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, there are those who will hate and who will kill even if every injustice is ended. You must fight them in the field, when they take to the field and hunt them in cities when they hide inside.

It was in the light of that experience in the south-western Philippines that we immediately condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States, for we recognized them immediately as desperate and despicable acts by that violent minority which seeks to enslave the world with fear. And indeed, they have given the world good reason to be afraid. The attack on the World Trade Center, which aimed to take the lives of the 50,000 people who worked inside it, shows us an enemy without pity, without compunction and prepared to use any means to achieve the greatest destruction.

The Philippines did not need to join the war on terrorism: it was in that war already, in the south-western part of our islands. The Philippines could not have done otherwise than to renew its commitment to fight terrorism in a wider field in the wake of 11 September. We know that this is an enemy that must be

fought everywhere so that it cannot again strike at will anywhere it pleases.

This is a fight between tolerance and bigotry, between reason and fanaticism, between law and anarchy, between justice and murder pretending to be just. In this fight, there is no side to choose but the one where the civilized nations of the world — long-time allies and former enemies — have chosen to stand united, not least here in this Hall.

The Secretary-General has declared that the 11 September attacks struck at everything our Organization stands for: peace, freedom, tolerance, human rights, and the very idea of a united human family.

I do not know if the future belongs to our side, but I am convinced that there will be no future if our side does not prevail in this fight — at least, no future that any of us would care to live in. In fact, it would not be a future in which most of us would be allowed to live. It would be a future where happiness was suspect, delight was blasphemy, beauty was a cause for shame and independent thought a capital crime.

But while terrorism cannot be placated, and no terrorist should be appeased, there is no doubt in our minds, either, that we must address the concerns that they pretend are the inspiration for their terrible deeds.

If the world can show that it will carry on, that it will persevere in creating a stronger, more just, more benevolent and more genuine international community across all lines of religion and race, then terrorism will have failed.

No, terrorism will not stop, but it will have failed. To stop terrorism, the terrorists themselves will have to be stopped. What we can do, however, is to strip them of their moral pretensions and take upon ourselves the causes that they have perverted.

No nation will indefinitely endure the yawning gap between rich and poor — a gap that is only growing bigger, not just within, but across the countries of the world. It is this growing disparity between the ever fewer rich and the ever-increasing poor that has given terrorism the freedom of movement and impunity from accountability that it has enjoyed.

Poverty can be reduced partly by national economic growth. But, more than that, societies have to adopt deliberate policies to ensure that the income levels of the poor rise faster than those of the rich.

Recent developments in the global economy have displayed the perils of overdependence on external markets. We must expand domestic demand and increase the purchasing power of the masses of our people.

This is largely the responsibility of each nation. We in the Philippines are addressing the affront of mass poverty through housing, education, lower medical costs, more efficient power, transportation and communications, infrastructure in the countryside, credit to small farmers and micro-industries, productivity, protection of the environment, and development of the areas farthest from our centre of political power and economic activity.

The international community also has a responsibility in the elimination of poverty. Commitments to devote a certain percentage of gross domestic product to official development assistance have a place. But the most effective, and least costly, anti-poverty measure on a global scale is for developed countries to open their markets wider to the products of the developing countries, including in particular those products turned out by poor people in the poor countries — agricultural commodities, textiles, clothing and footwear, as well as electrical and electronic appliances and components.

The global trading system cannot allow developed countries to subsidize heavily their agricultural exports while the developing countries are without the means to help their own farmers.

The recent Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) decided to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations. To ensure that the WTO does not lose credibility at this crucial time, our top priority is to ensure that the Doha round is truly a development round.

The effort to conquer poverty must embrace all cultures, all ethnic groups and all religious communities. Nations must allow all to preserve their own cultures.

We must make political autonomy accessible to regions that want it. At the same time, no one must be allowed to resort to terrorism to further political aims.

Respect for culture and religion, resources for development, openness to political autonomy within the sovereignty of the nation and rejection of terrorism are the foundations of the Philippine approach to our ethnic diversity and to the uplifting of our Muslim and tribal minorities.

The vision of nations where poverty is rapidly reduced cannot be attained in places where women and girls are mistreated and their rights trampled upon. As a woman head of State, woman head of Government and woman Commander-in-Chief of the world's fourteenth largest nation, I say: we cannot conquer poverty without liberating women and girls where they are oppressed. The gender gap is a part of the development gap and must be addressed with equal vigour.

The fight against terrorism, the struggle to eliminate poverty, the work on behalf of social and international justice, the strengthening of the rule of law, the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect, the practice of humanitarian compassion, the liberation of women, the never-ending quest for peace — these have long been on the United Nations agenda. We in the Philippines have been doing this in our region, in cooperation with our neighbours.

The heightened virulence of terrorism, the renewed sense of insecurity among the world's peoples and the alarming slowdown in the global economy have intensified the urgency and importance of our work. Together, let us get on with the job. It is serious. It is essential. It is urgent.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Philippines for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Dudau, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Dudau (Republic of Moldova) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to convey to you our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I am certain that your competence and active cooperation with United Nations Member States will pave the way for a successful and fruitful session.

Allow me also to join previous speakers in expressing our deep gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his outstanding work and for the professional manner in which he presided over the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly.

I should also like once again, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, to reiterate our warmest congratulations to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which was so well deserved, and for his re-election to another term of office. His tireless efforts in redefining the role of the United Nations in this changing world are certainly deeply appreciated and supported by my Government.

The barbaric terrorist attacks of 11 September have radically changed the international security environment. Terrorism has become the most serious and immediate threat to the security and stability of our States. A challenge was laid down, not only to the United States of America, but to the entire world community. We fully agree with the statement made by the President of the United States, Mr. George Bush, in his statement before this Assembly at the 44th plenary meeting, that "that threat cannot be ignored" and that "civilization itself — the civilization we share — is threatened".

The fight against international terrorism has clearly become a priority for the United Nations. Today we see a strong international coalition emerging which, in the short term, is determined to bring to justice the perpetrators of terrorist acts and, in the long term, to eliminate this evil from the face of the earth.

The Republic of Moldova, which immediately aligned itself with the ranks of this coalition, strongly condemned the indiscriminate large-scale terrorist attacks that took place in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Moldova has also unreservedly supported the actions undertaken by the United States in its legitimate self-defence and in accordance with the United Nations Charter and Security Council resolution 1368 (2001). Likewise, we support the global and multidimensional approach adopted by the United States in its war against terrorism.

The Republic of Moldova has demonstrated its political will to combat terrorist activities through concerted efforts with other countries in the framework of various regional and subregional organizations

Our Government has strengthened its counter-terrorism legislation in order to comply with relevant regional and United Nations conventions and with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Our country is also taking measures in order to speed up accession to most of the remaining specialized United Nations counter-terrorism conventions. This morning, I signed on behalf of my country the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

The tragic events of 11 September have shown that the international community must take further steps to resolve the longstanding international problems on which terrorism and violence feed. We must urgently address the conflicts around the world and eliminate their root causes and factors that can nurture the development of terrorism.

I feel obliged to add my voice to those who see the phenomenon of separatism as a root cause of conflicts and a threat to international peace and security. In a globalized and interdependent world, separatism affects the bases of multicultural societies and poses grave danger to the sovereignty and integrity of States. Like international terrorism, separatism emphasizes what divides rather than what unites us. As a country affected by separatism for many years, we have constantly noted this phenomenon and the connections it sometimes has with other serious criminal activities, including sometimes terrorism. This is why, in our opinion, this issue, among others, must be taken into account by the United Nations Member States in their efforts to elaborate and implement a comprehensive and efficient counter-terrorism strategy.

The fact that I am focusing on the issues of conflict settlement and separatism is not accidental. Over the years, my delegation has informed the Assembly of the efforts being made to resolve the conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova. However, I am obliged to note with regret the lack of any noticeable positive developments towards a comprehensive settlement. Despite the reasonable compromises on the part of the constitutional authorities in my country, the separatist regime continues to completely oppose any proposals to grant special status to the region as a constituent part of the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, the leaders of that region have given a unilateral interpretation to political documents worked out with the active mediation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Another matter of continuing concern is the fact that in recent years the illegal production of different types of armaments has been noted in this region. These armaments have reached other conflict zones through third countries, supporting terrorists, criminal groups and secessionist movements.

We should like to state once again that a complete and unconditional withdrawal of troops, munitions and armaments, as stipulated in the Istanbul OSCE Summit documents, would undoubtedly facilitate the peaceful and lasting settlement of this conflict.

In this connection, I would like to emphasize that my Government encourages the recent efforts of the Russian Federation to cut back on its weapons deployed in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Given the considerable progress that has been already made, we certainly hope that the process of destruction and removal of the weaponry will be completed before the Bucharest OSCE ministerial meeting this December. I would like also to express our gratitude to those Members of the United Nations that have contributed financially to the OSCE voluntary fund established in accordance with the Istanbul decisions.

The role of the United Nations in international peace and security remains an essential part of its global responsibilities. The Republic of Moldova reiterates its conviction that the best strategy for maintaining international peace and security is to eliminate the root causes of conflicts. In this regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's efforts to move into a culture of conflict prevention.

The submission of periodic regional reports to the Security Council on disputes of various types that may potentially threaten international peace and security is another important and necessary measure. The unequal attention given by the international system to different conflicts is still a matter of great concern. In order to be successful, preventive strategies must reach all regions in crisis.

The credibility of the United Nations is called into question whenever decisions mandating action in a particular crisis are not matched by timely deployment of peacekeeping forces. Experience in recent years has

shown that the United Nations capacity to meet an expanding and increasingly complex range of peacekeeping demands needs significant improvement. We are pleased to note that action has been taken to implement a number of practical measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his second report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Brahimi report on peace operations.

Moldova has already established the legislation and institutional framework for its future participation in the peacekeeping operations. I should also like to express the readiness of the Republic of Moldova to participate in the stand-by system, for which the institutional and technical preparations are currently in their concluding stage.

As we seek to enhance the United Nations capacity in conflict prevention and peacekeeping, we must also strengthen international cooperation for the promotion of sustainable development and the elimination of poverty worldwide. Development and poverty elimination are issues of tremendous importance to many Member States, including my own. Our economic development has been gravely affected by the illegal actions of separatists, as well by the negative consequences of globalization. These issues have been considered very important by our leaders at the Millennium Summit.

Since the beginning of this year the world economy has experienced a certain slowdown. In the aftermath of the incidents of 11 September, this tendency has been exacerbated. The Millennium Declaration recognized that the problems of both developing countries and countries with economies in transition have become even more acute, even tragic in recent months, as a result of globalization. We hope that developed countries will increase their support for us in dealing with our problems by granting greater assistance for development. Debt cancellation would play a significant role in allowing us to free up financial resources and redirect them towards stimulating our economies.

In meeting the challenges of globalization, the United Nations plays an indispensable role in international cooperation. We welcome its greater participation in development issues and in facing the tasks set out in the Millennium Declaration. These goals cannot be reached without significant financial support. The International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held next year offer a unique opportunity to find the resources required to meet those goals. We hope that the outcome of these two significant international events will be successful in this regard.

The Republic of Moldova remains open to all forms of cooperation and is willing to contribute, as much as possible, to reaching the common goals of sustainable development and economic stability. We consider that a comprehensive approach, based on the experience of other States and on the specific cultural character of a given country or region, will help us identify and apply the best strategy for sustainable development.

In order for the United Nations to remain relevant and credible, it must maintain a strong commitment to the continuing programme of reform and renewal. The reforms that have been undertaken and implemented in recent years have already done much to strengthen and revitalize the Organization. However, much remains to be done and, in particular, we need to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council. The Republic of Moldova believes that this reform should be guided by principles of equitable geographic representation, democracy, effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. It is on this basis that we will be able to modernize the Security Council and bring it into line with the substantial increase in the general membership of the United Nations.

In this context I would like once again to reiterate the position of my country with respect to the enlargement of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories: the Eastern European Group should be given one additional non-permanent membership seat.

Our country welcomes the process of revitalization and improvement of the General Assembly and, at the same time, supports efforts to restore the central role of the Assembly as a main representative body for debate at the United Nations.

This year the Republic of Moldova is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its independence. During these 10 years as a Member State of the United Nations, we have fully shared the common values of the Organization. We have achieved many significant results in our internal development; much remains to

be done, however. We have nonetheless laid down the foundations of a democratic society. This was not an easy task, but we have made progress. The most important achievement has been that we have laid down the foundations of a democratic society, with basic human rights and the rights of national minorities being respected. The main achievement has been the consolidation of the Republic of Moldova as a peace-loving independent European country.

The dramatic change of the situation in the international arena in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September calls for a new vision and a redefinition of the specific mechanisms for realizing the fundamental objectives of the Organization, which spring essentially from the founding philosophy of the Charter of the United Nations. In this respect, the Organization should draw conclusions from its own past and, relying on permanent support from its Member States, accomplish new tasks in the light of the imperatives of the time. I join in expressing the hope that the proceedings of the General Assembly — which are absolutely necessary for the international community in the twenty-first century — will also make it possible to ensure that this process moves in a positive direction.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon.

Mr. Hammoud (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which is meeting under critical and exceptional circumstances. We wish you every success in your arduous endeavours. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri. In addition, on this occasion, I would like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the efforts he has made throughout the year. We hope that he will be able to enhance the prospects for peace, stability, and development in the world during his second term of office.

The whole world was shocked by the enormity of the tragedy that struck the United States of America on 11 September — the barbaric terrorist acts against New York City and Washington, D.C. These acts exacted a high toll among innocent civilians and plunged the peoples and countries of the world into an atmosphere of gloom and anxiety. We once again extend our condolences to the families who lost their loved ones; some of them were Lebanese, or American of Lebanese descent. We share their deep sense of grief and sorrow.

From this rostrum, I would like to reiterate Lebanon's condemnation of these terrorist attacks. Lebanon stands ready to cooperate seriously, positively and responsibly with the United States and the United Nations in the fight against terrorism, in accordance with the rules of international law and with the prerogatives of national sovereignty.

For a long time, Lebanon has suffered from Israeli occupation and Israel's terrorist practices. We resisted this occupation until it ultimately ended with Israel's withdrawal from most of our national territories. It is perfectly normal in this context to stress the need for distinguishing between terrorism, which we strongly condemn, and peoples' legitimate right to struggle for the liberation of their territories from foreign occupation on the basis of the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolutions. As regards Lebanon, we have to refer to the April Understanding of 1996, an agreement which was reached under the auspices of the United States and France after Israel had carried out the Qana Massacre that same year, in addition to the Taif Agreement that had laid down the tenets of our national reconciliation. A series of Security Council presidential statements have given the Council's blessing to the Agreement. Both the Taif Agreement and the April Understanding recognized the legitimacy of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

Let me recall here that had Israel not invaded Lebanon on 14 March 1978, there would have been no Lebanese Resistance — which, of course, is the subject of our pride — to counter this invasion.

Had Security Council resolution 425 (1978) adopted on 19 March been implemented without delay, as stipulated in its provisions, the Resistance would not have been born.

Had it not been for widening the scope of the Israeli invasion of Lebanese territory and the subsequent occupation of Beirut in 1982, the Resistance would not have escalated.

Had it not been for Israel's persistence in occupying what it called "the security zone", no one would have had to resist it and ultimately force it to

withdraw in May 2000 from most of the territories that it had occupied.

Had Israel not occupied the Palestinian territories, there would have been no need for a courageous uprising against occupation.

It must be pointed out that Lebanon is determined to fight terrorism. We have acceded to 10 out of the 12 conventions relevant to the question of international terrorism. We stand ready to respond positively to any international initiative, including the convening of an international conference for this purpose, to arrive at a standard definition of terrorism. It would be wise not to link terrorism to a particular race or religion, particularly to Arabs and Muslims, if we want to avoid setting world civilizations and religions on a collision course. We can thus avoid falling into the trap designed by those who are pushing the world towards collision, conflict and strife.

Side by side with its Arab brothers, Lebanon is determined to exert additional efforts to combat terrorism and eradicate its various root causes. In 1998, Arab States successfully negotiated and concluded the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, a Convention with clear-cut purposes and objectives.

The events of 11 September have demonstrated that humanity has not yet reached its ultimate evolutionary stage. They also prove that unbridled global rejectionist movements and terrorist groups that know no boundaries and accept no restrictions are capable of undermining our confidence in everything we have achieved so far. They are working to establish what can be referred to as a "new world disorder" and global instability.

Under the circumstances, and given prevailing fears, a thorough look at what is happening in the Middle East conflict zone would clearly reveal the difficulty of realizing the objectives of peace and development promoted by the United Nations. In recent months, the world has witnessed continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, unjust and arbitrary Israeli practices, desecration of holy sites, blockades, killings, assassinations and displacements. Such acts continue with no international deterrence or control.

Intransigent Israeli policies, deviation from the Madrid principles and terms of reference, and stripping the peace process of its political content in favour of so-called Israeli security considerations indicate that projected solutions to the Middle East crisis are divided among many conflicting rationales. There is the rationale of a partial solution and that of a comprehensive solution; the rationale of basing a solution on force and that of basing it on what is right, just and grounded in United Nations resolutions; the rationale of achieving security at the expense of peace and that of making peace the foundation of security.

In the aftermath of 11 September, attention has focused on the need to step up the effort to find a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, a solution that should allow the Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian State on their national soil. It is our duty to recall that a just and comprehensive peace necessitates that we simultaneously address all aspects of the Middle East conflict. The Lebanese and Syrian tracks must not be separated from the track of the overall settlement. That track is stalled, and reviving it will require the devotion of additional efforts. The liberation of Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation must be completed. Israel must withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967. The question of Palestinian refugees, their legitimate right to return, and Lebanon's right to oppose their resettlement on its territories must not be ignored. This opposition is grounded in the principles of fairness, justice and sovereignty.

In the light of the above, we believe that a comprehensive peace built on justice and on the resolutions conferring international legitimacy is the sole guarantee of the sustainability of any desirable solution.

There are two fundamental questions in Lebanon that are of direct concern to the United Nations: one is the mandate of the international forces in southern Lebanon and the other is the destiny of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

In paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1365 (2001), which was adopted on 31 July, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), taking into account its possible reconfiguration into an observer mission in the light of the developments on the ground, following appropriate consultations with the Government of Lebanon.

Due to the gravity of the situation, and in anticipation of the Secretary-General's report, it is important for me to stress from this rostrum that both logic and the realities on the ground call for maintaining Unifier's existing mandate without amending it or reconfiguring the mission into an observer force. On the contrary, we believe that UNIFIL's role must be strengthened, particularly as it has not yet fulfilled the entire mandate entrusted to it by the international community in Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which was adopted on 19 March 1978. That mandate cannot be implemented by an observer force due to the following questions that are still pending.

The first pending question is the verification of the Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territories. It is a known fact that the United Nations did not verify the Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territories. It only verified the withdrawal of Israeli forces to a de facto withdrawal line, which became known as the blue line. That line is not in conformity with Lebanon's internationally recognized borders, a fact recognized in subsequent reports of the Secretary-General.

Therefore, the Shab'a farms, on the slopes of Mount Hermon, remained under Israeli occupation, together with three additional points along the line of withdrawal drawn by the United Nations. At the time, Lebanon expressed its reservations on these points. These territories are Lebanese lands and Lebanon reserves its natural right to restore them and to extend its sovereignty to them. Lebanon would like to stress here that it will stand up for every inch of its national soil and for all its rights to its water resources, in accordance with international law. In that regard, we must draw attention to the fact that Israel continues to violate Lebanese sovereignty on a daily basis. In his report issued in July of this year, the Secretary-General described these violations as provocative. Furthermore, Israel continues to increase the frequency of its threats against Lebanon and Syria.

The second pending question concerns the restoration of international peace and security. In his reports to the Security Council between May 2000 and July 2001, the Secretary-General recognized that UNIFIL had not fully implemented the task entrusted to it. He repeatedly said that there is a third task the international forces have yet to undertake, and on which UNIFIL will have to concentrate. That task is the restoration of international peace and security in the region. How can we speak of a third task yet to be completed by UNIFIL under Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and at the same time discuss the possibility of reconfiguring UNIFIL into an observer mission?

In that respect, we are duty-bound to recall that the security of the region is indivisible. We would be deceiving ourselves if we were to believe that peace and security can be restored to the region outside the context of a comprehensive overall solution to all aspects of the conflict on all its tracks. Such an undertaking requires an all-inclusive effort, not only by UNIFIL but also by the entire United Nations, which should be responsible for the enforcement of its resolutions, particularly resolution 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

From this rostrum, I call on the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council to preserve UNIFIL's existing mandate. The timing is of particular importance, given the serious circumstances prevailing in our region and in the world. We must also recall that in May of this year the Security Council adopted a statement in which members acknowledged Lebanon's concerns and apprehensions, including those relating to the future.

Lebanon is tirelessly seeking to achieve a total Israeli withdrawal from its territories. At the same time, it attaches great importance to the release of the Lebanese people kidnapped by Israel during its occupation of our land and thereafter detained in Israeli jails. They remain incarcerated in Israeli prisons as hostages, in contravention of international laws and instruments, particularly the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the subsequent Protocols thereto.

The 130,000 landmines that were left behind by the Israeli occupation are still killing, maiming and harming scores of civilians in Lebanon. They curtail their freedom of movement and obstruct their work. We consider this to be a continued — albeit indirect — form of occupation of Lebanese territories by Israel. In the light of this situation, the United Nations and the international community should make a greater effort to compel Israel to hand over all maps and records disclosing the locations of the mines, which have to be cleared as soon a possible.

However, with respect to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who have been provisionally hosted on Lebanese land ever since their

expulsion from their homes in Palestine — and for whose final status the United Nations bears essential responsibility — we reiterate our demand for a just solution to their cause, on the basis of the implementation of their right to return and of our refusal to resettle them in Lebanon.

In this regard, it behoves us to remember that the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would constitute a time bomb that would jeopardize the peace, security and stability in the Middle East; such refugees will relentlessly seek to return to their homeland and Lebanon is unable to integrate them, given the precariousness of its own internal equilibrium and the fact that provisions of its national pact do not allow for any form of resettlement.

Furthermore, Lebanon appeals for greater international attention to enable us to provide urgently needed assistance that could help return our liberated lands to normalcy, restore economic balance and provide opportunities for growth after long years of occupation and destruction.

This is an era of responsibility and accountability for the world, but accountability cannot be selective, nor can it be based on double standards. During the long years of occupation of the Lebanese territories, Israeli bombardment and the destruction that ensued killed thousands and injured and disabled thousands more. Our infrastructure, vital facilities, houses, schools, farms and bridges were destroyed and our growth and development were hindered. Lebanon must therefore be adequately compensated. Lebanon will spare no effort in appealing to the relevant international political and judicial organs to request that Israel make reparations for the damage resulting from its acts of aggression.

It may be useful to recall here that Israel did not withdraw from most of the Lebanese territories of its own accord; neither did it withdraw in compliance with the decision of an international authority or in response to a political requirement that remained on the table for over 22 years. Rather, it withdrew under pressure from the Lebanese resistance, which was embraced by the Lebanese State. It withdrew because of the steadfastness of the Lebanese people. Its withdrawal was not a voluntary démarche for peace, as some would have it. The withdrawal was a measure taken to avoid peace, and instead to seek alleged security at the expense of the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace.

Lebanon is a democratic Arab country, open to the world, with a civilization that goes back thousands of years. Thanks to our diverse social composition, our experience is informed by coexistence and consensus. It is a unique experience, rarely paralleled in our world today. We call on the Assembly to mobilize the forces of peace and justice in order to redress the historical injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people. The Assembly must bring about a just and comprehensive solution to one of the most complex and dangerous regional conflicts in the Middle East. It is a conflict that has depleted the resources of its people, hindered its progress and stunted its contributions to the world. This solution will unfetter its creative capabilities and enable it to develop a global partnership free from fear, injustice and terror.

My country is proud to be hosting the next Arab Summit, to be convened in Beirut in March next year. Preparations are already under way to receive the Arab monarchs and presidents. We will also be hosting the Ninth Summit of the International Organization of la Francophonie in the fall of 2002, under the heading, "Dialogue among cultures". Lebanon is a founding member of the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie. Lebanon, which participated in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is capable of proving that it can reassert its active presence and again take a pioneering role at the regional and international levels. We come from a time-honoured civilization, and are blessed by unique and distinguished experience of coexistence. We will put this to the service of the noble objectives of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sahr Matturi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Matturi (Sierra Leone): My delegation extends to you, Sir, its warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this body at its fifty-sixth session. Given your impressive credentials, we are confident that under your guidance we will conclude our deliberations successfully. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, who

admirably conducted the affairs of the epoch-making Millennium Assembly last year.

Let me also warmly congratulate our indefatigable Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his reappointment to a second term of office and on his award, with the United Nations, of the 2001 Nobel Prize for Peace. As citizens of the West African subregion, we in Sierra Leone are proud of his stewardship. Sierra Leone is indeed indebted to him, the staff of the Secretariat and the United Nations family for their invaluable support of our effort to secure peace and stability in my country.

Forty years ago, on 29 September to be exact, Sierra Leone was admitted as the one hundredth Member of the United Nations. During the period that followed, we made our own modest contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. We have faithfully adhered to the purposes and principles of the Charter. We have practised, and continue to practise, tolerance and good-neighbourliness. Our faith in the Organization remains as strong as it was 40 years ago.

At the same time, the United Nations and its agencies have done a lot for the people of Sierra Leone. As President Kabbah told the Millennium Summit last year, in the course of its membership, Sierra Leone has tested the capacity of the United Nations to respond to major challenges, especially in the areas of peacekeeping, through the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and of humanitarian law, through the proposed special court to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of Sierra Leonean law, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone. In conveying our sincere thanks to the Organization and the rest of the international community for their support, my delegation expresses the hope that Sierra Leone and the United Nations will continue to work closely for peace, security and sustainable development in the coming years.

Sadly, this session of the General Assembly is taking place in the aftermath of the despicable acts of terrorism inflicted on our host country on 11 September 2001 — acts that claimed the lives of thousands of Americans and of the nationals of 86 other countries. As we share their grief and renew our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and the Government of the United States, we Sierra Leoneans are reminded of that ominous day in January 1999 when over 5,000 innocent civilians were brutally killed during the rebel onslaught on our capital city. Hundreds of others, including children and young girls, were abducted or raped or had limbs deliberately amputated. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is deplorable and must be eradicated. My delegation would like to assure this Assembly that we shall do everything within our power and available resources to support the current multilateral counter-terrorism effort under the aegis of the United Nations.

The new emerging coalition to counteract the scourge of terrorism is absolutely necessary. However, the Sierra Leone delegation strongly believes that we should also strengthen existing coalitions or build new ones against those forces that continue to kill millions of children and adults throughout the world every single day. We know these forces. We know their vicious and destructive powers. Hunger, poverty, malnutrition, malaria, HIV/AIDS, brutality and intolerance — these are but a few of them.

Sierra Leone calls upon this Assembly and the entire international community to use the current international solidarity against terrorism to translate the Agenda for Peace, the Agenda for Development, the Millennium Declaration, the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and similar strategies and goals into a series of new coalitions: a new coalition against childhood diseases; a new coalition against poverty and human underdevelopment; a new coalition against the scourge of HIV/AIDS and malaria; and a brand new coalition against the accumulation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

There has been a marked improvement in the situation in Sierra Leone. The serious humanitarian crisis still prevails, but is gradually subsiding. Thousands of ex-combatants have been disarmed and demobilized. Government authority and civil administrative services are gradually being established in areas previously occupied by rebels. Our restructured army is now truly professional, thanks to the intensive training programme directed by the Government of the United Kingdom.

By all accounts, we can say that the overall security and safety situation is one of great expectation. In the coming months, the people of Sierra Leone will once again start to enjoy to the fullest extent their basic

right to life — a life free from brutal armed rebellion such as that provoked and abetted by external forces and fuelled by blood diamonds for 10 long years. In this connection, my delegation would like to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations and its agencies, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNAMSIL troop-contributing countries, the United Kingdom and other friendly nations for their individual and collective contributions to the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Allow me from this rostrum to express the condolences of the Government and people of Sierra Leone for those brave and dedicated ambassadors of peace from the United Kingdom, Zambia, the Ukraine and Bulgaria who lost their lives in the recent helicopter accidents in my country.

Despite our optimism for peace and stability in Sierra Leone, past experience of adventurous attempts by the rebels to renege on their obligations under peace agreements have taught us a lesson: We have to remain constantly vigilant. The safety and security of the people will remain high on our national agenda, as will the process of consolidating the peace through sustainable development. This is why we would like the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to continue to generate the necessary international support for our post-conflict and peace-building effort.

In this connection, we would like to draw the attention of the international community and those who assist us in the implementation of our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme to the fact that the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants will soon come to a successful end. However, the process of reintegration remains crucial. We could lose the gains we have made in the peace process if we allow the reintegration of ex-combatants to collapse for lack of adequate funding. As President Kabbah pointed out recently, we also have tens of thousands of young people who have never seen, touched or used an AK-47 rifle or a rocket-propelled grenade. They, too, are waiting to be integrated into the mainstream of our economic and social sectors.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to appeal to the international community, as a matter of urgency, to help us remove some of the root causes of conflict by increasing support for our reintegration and integration programmes for the benefit of youths. We should no longer allow the legitimate social and economic needs or grievances of these young people to be exploited by ruthless warlords whose sole objective is to drain our precious mineral resources for their own selfish ends.

Speaking of diamonds, I would like to inform this Assembly that our diamond certification system, established under Security Council resolution 1306 (2000), has so far been a major success. First, there has been a substantial increase in revenue from legitimate diamonds since the system was established just over a year ago. Secondly, it has also helped to reduce the incidence of an old problem that preceded the phenomenon of conflict or blood diamonds — namely, smuggling. My Government is in the process of updating the status of the certification system in its third report to the Security Council through the Committee that is monitoring the implementation of resolution 1306 (2000).

The sacrifices we have made for peace in Sierra Leone are not for Sierra Leoneans alone; they are also in the interest of peace and stability in the Mano River Union triangle in particular and the West African subregion as a whole. The recent rapprochement at the ministerial level, followed by meetings of the Joint Security Committee and the initiative launched by the Mano River Union Women Peace Network in the three countries — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — augur well for the proposed Mano River Union summit meeting. Meanwhile, I can assure the Assembly that President Kabbah remains committed to his determination to help restore adherence to the principle of good-neighbourliness in the Union. This should lead to a revitalization of economic cooperation programmes among the three countries. We must admit that conflict and tension in the Union have had a negative impact on the ability of ECOWAS to concentrate on the principal objective for which it was created, namely, economic cooperation and development.

Mr. Balzan (Malta), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are aware that primary responsibility for alleviating poverty, stimulating economic growth and reducing conflicts and their often disastrous consequences lies in the hands of the developing countries themselves. We are also aware that development requires sound fiscal policies and rational management of both our human and natural resources.

However, the international consensus is that sustainable development also requires greater cooperation between developing and developed countries in such areas as trade, debt relief and external financing. In this regard, Sierra Leone, one of the least developed countries in the world, eagerly looks forward to the results of the forthcoming Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

There are many pressing and unresolved problems on the international peace and security agenda of the United Nations. One of them is the situation in Palestine. It remains the core issue in the search for peace in the Middle East. In our view, it also breeds tension, and directly fans the flames of war in other parts of the world. In the current state of affairs it is no longer enough to speak about the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. They have a right to an independent State of their own. In short, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State is well overdue. In terms of international peace and security, we cannot afford any further delay.

Sierra Leone is obviously not a nuclear Power. However, as a member of the human family, we are concerned about the threat or use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, we believe that these weapons pose the greatest threat to human survival. Therefore, we shall continue to support universal adherence to regional and international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. For instance, Sierra Leone recently ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we strongly believe is central to the question of the vertical, or qualitative, proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We are also seriously concerned about the proliferation of conventional arms, including those that have brought untold suffering to the people of Sierra Leone during the past 10 years.

Last July, at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, we pleaded in vain for action to prevent the transfer of these weapons to non-State entities such as terrorists and rebels who commit atrocities against innocent civilians. The recent terrorist attacks and the awareness that biological weapons in the hands of such non-State entities pose a threat to us all should, in the view of my delegation, prod those Member States that were unable to support our plea last July to seriously reconsider their position on this important issue of arms transfers to non-State entities. We also need their full support in the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at that important Conference.

In conclusion, my delegation is convinced that the international community has at its disposal the instruments, institutions, strategies, targets and road maps for counteracting and eradicating terrorism, HIV/AIDS, malaria, hunger, malnutrition and other deadly forces, through closer multilateral cooperation.

Let the fifty-sixth session of this Assembly, which was interrupted by the common enemy of terrorism, go down in history as the new multilateral cooperation session, one that should inspire all nations, large and small, nuclear and non-nuclear, to deal resolutely with the other common enemies of the human race.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Anastase Gasana, Chairman of the delegation of Rwanda.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the Rwandan delegation, to join previous speakers in extending from this rostrum of the United Nations our sincere and warm congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly at the fifty-sixth session. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor for the farsightedness with which he led the work of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I also wish, on behalf of my Government, to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan on his re-election as Secretary-General of our Organization. His remarkable efforts in strengthening the role of the United Nations and his numerous initiatives to resolve conflicts have been eloquently attested to by his election to a second term of office, and even more by the Nobel Peace Prize that has just been awarded to him.

This session began in a very tragic climate in the wake of the cowardly and ignoble acts orchestrated by enemies of international peace and security. Those terrorist acts led to the deaths of thousands of innocent victims in the cities of New York and Washington. This was a very heavy blow to the Government and the

people of the United States and also a challenge to the United Nations and to the entire international community.

The Government of Rwanda learned of these ignoble acts with indignation and consternation, and has presented its condolences to the American Government and the families directly affected. The Rwandan Government reiterates its condemnation of terrorism and remains open to all initiatives designed to combat all forms of terrorism. It is in this spirit that my country unreservedly supports all the resolutions adopted against terrorism, in particular resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September, and we reaffirm our determination to implement them.

The acts of 11 September 2001 are a challenge to the United Nations and to each of its Member States. Since the United Nations is the crucible of international peace and security, and since terrorist groups take innocent human lives, it is up to every Member State, every truly human organization and every person who cherishes peace and justice to fight as vigorously as possible against such a terrorist group, no matter what its pretext, no matter how powerful it may be. When we say no matter how powerful, we know what we are saying, having been victims ourselves.

We were victims of the terror not of just any organization, but of a State that in reality became a non-State, but with all the State machinery available to it to fight the very people whose protection was its most fundamental duty. Rwanda and its people lived under the terror of a murderous, terrorist and genocidal State for three months. This reign of terror by a State, as the Assembly well knows, took more than 1 million human lives in 1994. The instruments of this blind, merciless terror, whose overwhelming result was genocide, are well known: the organization of paramilitary militias commonly known as the Interahamwe, and the former Rwandese Armed Forces, known as the ex-FAR. From this rostrum we call for these two organizations, which for a decade have been veritable killing machines, to be duly listed as terrorist groups to be fought and pursued throughout the world.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, which since 1994 has been harbouring these forces of evil, has fed them, has provided them with arms and munitions and has allied itself with them, must respond to the Security Council's repeated appeals to stop all support for the negative forces on its territories, including the Interahamwe and ex-Far, which planned and carried out genocide in Rwanda.

With regard to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and throughout the Great Lakes region in Africa, my country is determined to implement the Lusaka Agreement, which, with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has two important components: the inter-Congolese dialogue, which should lead to a political solution to the Congolese crisis, and the disarmament and withdrawal of negative forces, which should lead to peace on the Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundi borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We wish to note with great satisfaction, the actions of the sisterly Republic of South Africa, which, given the failure of inter-Congolese dialogue in Addis Ababa — because of, among other things, lack of financial resources — generously offered food and lodging to over 300 Congolese delegates going to that greatly anticipated inter-Congolese forum. We wish also to congratulate the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)-Goma and the Mouvement pour la libération du Congo (MLC)-Gbadolite on their fine initiative to create a special force to carry out the disarmament and disengagement of negative forces under their control on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on having invited the Kinshasa Government to join this initiative.

Regarding human rights, we would like to reaffirm our attachment to the rule of law in international relations. We are determined to strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government of Rwanda welcomed with great interest the report on human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is regrettable, however, that the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garretón, was not present when the report was submitted on 8 November 2001. Because of his absence, no real debate between the parties concerned and the Rapporteur was possible. Once again, my delegation finds this highly regrettable.

The report on human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo contains numerous gratuitous allegations, including one on the alleged annexation of that country. We would like to recall here that the regular Rwandan army did not cross borders into the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to annex the country, as the report claims, but, as we have

explained and demonstrated a number of times, to ensure the security of our territory and our population. We acted in the context "of the inherent right of individual ... self-defence" of a country, as we are authorized to do under Chapter VII, Article 51 of the Charter.

Indeed, security in the north of Rwanda has been and continues to be constantly disrupted by the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe militia that committed the genocide in 1994 and that are using Congolese territory as their rear base in order to repeat their gruesome deeds. These armed groups are infiltrating Rwanda and killing thousands of innocent people. We hope that phase III of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), in close cooperation with the initiative of the RCD Goma-MLC Gbadolite, will lead to the complete disarmament of these groups and to stability and peace in the Great Lakes region.

We are pleased to note the establishment of a Transitional Government in Burundi. We believe that this is a major step towards the reconciliation to which our brothers, the people of Burundi, aspire. Today the Great Lakes region is seeking solutions to the conflicts that undermine it. May the example of Burundi, under the inspiration of President Nelson Mandela, bear fruit in the general interest and for the benefit of the people of Burundi and Africa as a whole.

Also regarding Africa, we feel that a definitive solution to the problem of Western Sahara should also be found.

We would like to see peace in the Middle East. The question of Palestinian refugees, which is several decades old, needs to be re-examined. Indeed, the existence of an independent Palestinian State, alongside an independent Israeli State assured of its existence as such is necessary for peace in the Middle East. The friends of the Israelis and the Palestinians within the United Nations, including us, ought rather at this stage to work on cultivating and strengthening relations of friendship and cooperation between these two fraternal States — the Israeli State and the Palestinian State. We are anxious to start work on this noble task.

Aside from Africa and the Middle East, we are pleased to note the significant progress made on the Korean peninsula, where both Koreas have shown encouraging signs of reaching a final settlement of a conflict arose in the context of the cold war.

This fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly is the first after the Millennium Summit, and thus should follow it up and lay the new foundation for the future of mankind. The Summit stressed, among the values that underpin international relations and respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter, the role that the United Nations ought to play and recommended the creation of a propitious climate for the development of the least developed countries that were not yet on the path towards globalization.

Throughout this general debate poverty and the problem of debt have been stressed as major obstacles to development and thus to entry into the era of globalization. Globalization, with its advantages for some and problems for others, does not seem to be able to resolve the problem of the gap between the rich and poor countries. To the contrary, the gap between them continues to grow. The marginalization of poor countries in international trade and the debt burden have severely hampered their efforts for development and have exacerbated their poverty. This is why the United Nations needs to define policies for the development of all and adopt international measures to support poor countries in the field of investment. Such measures should also be aimed at cancelling debt and ensuring adequate integration of these countries into the world economy.

In this context, we call on the United Nations to reconsider the report submitted to the Security Council by the Independent Inquiry led by Mr. Carlsson, former Prime Minister of Sweden, on which there has been no follow-up to date. As a Member of the United Nations, we believe that the Organization to which we belong should undertake a follow-up to this report that defines well the need for economic and social reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Enele Sopoaga, Chairman of the delegation of Tuvalu.

Mr. Sopoaga (Tuvalu): I am honoured to address the General Assembly. Speaking on behalf of the people and the Government of Tuvalu, I extend Tuvalu's greetings to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session and our congratulations to the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly on their election. I

also pledge Tuvalu's full support and cooperation during their term of office.

As we come to the end of this general debate, we are still overshadowed by the loss of many innocent lives and property as the result of the barbaric terrorist attack on America in September. We are further saddened by the losses earlier this week resulting from the plane accident in our host state, New York, and our host country, America. Tuvalu therefore joins others in reiterating to the people and Government of America our strong condemnation of the terrorist attacks and our pledge of strong solidarity with the United States of America.

Let me also convey Tuvalu's deepest sorrow and sympathy to the families of the victims of the plane crash, and offer our prayers to the people and Government of America, and equally to the people and Government of the Dominican Republic. We wholly share their bereavement and grief.

As the newest Member of the United Nations, having joined on the eve of the historic Millennium Summit last year, Tuvalu is more than ever aware of its responsibilities to the United Nations and what the Organization stands for. In June this year, Tuvalu established its Permanent Mission here in New York. Although this has been costly, Tuvalu believes the cost is offset by what the United Nations stands for. Our presence in the General Assembly reflects a basic belief we hold true: that the United Nations, through its enfranchising activities, can help Tuvalu and other countries like us by being an advocate with regard to the issues that concern us most.

Tuvalu is proud that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 was awarded to our Secretary-General and the United Nations itself. This award is a telling recognition of the vast contributions the United Nations has made in so many fields and on so many fronts: to peace around the world; to the protection of the individual, no matter his or her origin or circumstances; and to the upholding of the basic United Nations principle that every human being should have every opportunity to lead a better and more fulfilling life. We congratulate the Secretary-General and the Organization for this recognition.

There is no doubt in Tuvalu that peace and stability are indispensable to the well-being of freedom-loving people everywhere. The world cannot ignore threats to peace and stability, no matter what their causes may be, be they economic, social or environmental. The terrorist attacks in the United States of America and what has happened around the world since 11 September have made those of us here in this great Hall today feel very anxious. However, the very cause of this anxiety points clearly to the proper role of the United Nations. The General Assembly must be a strong advocate of what the Secretary-General, in his new road map, calls a new "culture of prevention".

In our view, pursuit of this new culture is worthy and must take advantage of the new spirit of cooperation that is now emerging to facilitate the elimination of the causes of terrorism and threats to peace and stability. In this regard, it is imperative to address problems in an open and representative dialogue based on consensus and mutual respect and understanding.

The consensus-building approach that we in the Pacific region often call the "Pacific way" may well prove useful in our collective venture for universal cooperation. Tuvalu is committed to its obligation to adhere to the United Nations resolutions to eliminate terrorism, and thus is taking steps to accede to the 12 United Nations and international conventions on terrorism. But to honour such obligations in practice is easier said than done. We need technical and financial support from the international community to build up our legislative, surveillance and enforcement tools if we are to have any hope of meeting these obligations beyond our present capabilities.

Also, we must not lose sight of the need for strong coalitions to deal with other pressing global issues, including conflicts and wars; the challenges of globalization; poverty and underdevelopment; and the effects of environmental degradation and climate change.

Universal cooperation against threats to peace and stability cannot, however, be fully achieved as long as the United Nations lacks the will to recognize fair and just representation within it of a democratic and economically developed State with a population of 23 million. The Republic of China on Taiwan is also suffering in the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks, having lost innocent lives as well as property. Like us, they suffer from the onslaught of natural disasters; epidemics and diseases, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and other threats of instability.

Yet in all these crises, and despite their enormous contribution to the world economy and international development — including technological advancement — as well as their consistent demonstration of international responsibility, the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan have been left to fend for themselves, denied the right to proper representation and collaboration, not only in the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization, but in nearly every other intergovernmental body. The voice with which they could share their plight and thereby benefit from world cooperation is silenced. However, the irony is that for more than 50 years, no authority other than the Republic of China on Taiwan itself has had full sovereign control over Taiwan, its population and the running of its affairs. To visit the country, for example, one must have immigration papers issued by its own authorities.

While we welcome the wise decision of the World Trade Organization last week to admit the Republic of China on Taiwan, it is Tuvalu's strong view that the United Nations must take the lead and seriously reconsider United Nations membership for the Republic of China on Taiwan, beyond the politics of exclusion and on the basis of the reality of things.

In Tuvalu and many other countries in the Pacific, we know that our economic vulnerability is fertile ground for forces of terror that can threaten the security and survival not only of the islands, but also of the region and the world. We are worried about the growing global interdependence and what that may bring to our shores. We need to improve our ability to share and disseminate information on transnational crimes, particularly those involving drug trafficking, money laundering, bogus investments, and other dangerous and dubious schemes that often arrive in the Pacific islands under the pretext of being legitimate.

We believe that, if we are left on our own, these threats will continue to expose Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries to forces outside our control. It is vital, therefore, that individual Pacific island Governments be given the back-up that is needed to boost their ability to tackle security threats and fight crime. The existing regional security arrangements under the Pacific Islands Forum and its sister regional agencies in the Pacific can, indeed, play a vital role. However, they need to be further strengthened to enable them to complement national security efforts more effectively. Further solidifying of cooperation between our regional organizations and the United Nations, moreover, is fundamental to the success of national and regional efforts vital for regional and global security.

I should like to add here that Tuvalu highly commends the role played by the United Nations and other international organizations and major countries in helping restore peace in the Pacific following the recent turbulence in the region.

Tuvalu is not in a good position to take advantage of the opportunities offered by trade liberalization. Like many island countries, Tuvalu currently lacks the know-how, trained people and adequate infrastructure to reap the benefits that are enjoyed here. If there is benefit for Tuvalu in a free trade world — and we believe there is — then surely Tuvalu must have in place the means that would allow us to reap that benefit.

In more ways than one, small island developing States such as Tuvalu are at the sharp end, the cutting edge, of development. For us, overseas development aid is indispensable to the development and sustenance of basic services necessary for security and survival. Our priorities continue to be education, health services and fresh water.

While we commend with great appreciation the generosity of our development partners, particularly our traditional partners, it has to be noted that Tuvalu and other small island developing States, like the landlocked and least developed countries and other developing countries, will for some time continue to rely on external financing through official development assistance to address their unique development needs.

In our view, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, both of which will be held next year, must also capitalize on the premises laid out under the reviewed Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the Secretary-General's road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration as the key tools to address the unique circumstances and vulnerabilities of small island developing States. Ultimately, this must lead to more effective delivery of assistance that is flexible and more responsive to the sustainable development needs

of small island developing States and of developing countries in general.

With limited exploitable resources, Tuvalu, like many other small island developing States, relies heavily on the surrounding seas for its food security and economic development. The proper protection of the oceans from hazardous pollution is therefore vital, and the sustainable management and exploitation of fisheries and other marine resources is extremely important to our sustainable development and survival. Building local capacity to conserve, manage and harvest marine resources in a sustainable manner is crucial and should therefore be supported.

As has already been said in this debate, the biggest long-term threat to the people of Tuvalu is posed by the effects of climate change, in particular rising sea levels. Recent reports released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have confirmed beyond doubt the correlation between accelerated atmospheric warming and sea-level rise. In Tuvalu too it is our strong belief that the weather is growing more severe, hotter and drier, and that there have been unusually high seas eroding foreshores and intruding into freshwater lenses. We believe that the cumulative effect of carbon dioxide emissions in industrial and other countries into the atmosphere has, in sum, created a future that is very uncertain in Tuvalu.

It may not be known in this Hall but unique within the United Nations membership are the Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Those four countries are the only Member States that consist entirely of low-lying coral atolls and reef islands. In the event of further rising sea levels, where are we to hide? Eventually asking countries to take us in as environmental refugees is not what Tuvalu is after in the long run. What we prefer is that our great-grandchildren should grow up the way I did and the way my wife and our brothers and sisters did in our island communities, learning the traditions, customs and culture of Tuvalu, and living our way of life.

Tuvalu is not alone in sharing that view. Tens of millions of people who live on islands or in coastal communities face the gloomy onslaught of rising sea levels. Such vulnerable geography is everywhere. How ironic it would be if decades from now the last Member to enter the United Nations, Tuvalu, were the first Member State to withdraw because it had disappeared without a trace.

In the shrinking world we live in, environmental pollution has never known artificial boundaries. The presence of higher than normal levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is a legacy of development in industrial countries spanning the past 200 years. I hope that industrial countries realize that nature is now imposing a penalty for that development. Unfortunately, it is Tuvalu and others with little or nothing to do with the causes which are now forced to pay.

While we are heartened by the positive outcome of the seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held at Marrakesh, and while we are looking forward to the full implementation of that Convention and of the Kyoto Protocol commitments, we would also hope that goodwill will prevail beyond instruments and conventions to assist those most affected to adapt to the immediate and long-term effects of climate change.

This is not the time to shrink from environmental and survival responsibility. Like the international war being waged against terrorism, a global solution to the threat posed by climate change and sea-level rise will save Tuvalu and many other small island States from disappearing. Our collective resolve to remove causes of terrorism and threats to peace and security, including poverty and underdevelopment, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation, will ensure a truly peaceful and secure village for all of humanity.

May God bless the United Nations; may God bless its peoples.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Amraiya Naidu, Chairman of the delegation of Fiji.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): Fiji mourns the recent losses and world-changing tragedies which the United States of America has endured. We remember the many lives lost in that adversity, and we express the hope that peace and goodwill may prevail. Now is the time to make haste to galvanize collaborative efforts by developed and developing nations in the global fight against terrorism.

We congratulate His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Ambassador Han's assumption of the presidency of the

General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We pledge complete support during his term of office, fully aware that the qualities that have marked his eminent and distinguished career promise a resounding conclusion to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly despite its difficult start.

Fitting tribute is also due to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland. His leadership over the previous year successfully concluded a truly hectic and full schedule of business, including some difficult issues and special sessions during the period of the fifty-fifth session. He leaves an indelible mark in the annals of the United Nations.

My Government congratulates His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on his appointment as Secretary-General for a second term; this signifies the trust and confidence that the United Nations places in him. He has aptly been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which he shares with the United Nations. Fiji welcomes the road map he has outlined for the Organization, which, under his creative and competent leadership, will deliver the reforms needed to launch the Organization into the twenty-first century.

In the wake of the political crisis that triggered instability in Fiji in 2000, my Government set itself two immediate tasks: to restore constitutional democracy and to stabilize our fragile economy. Those goals are being achieved. Moreover, my Government is continuing to pursue strong economic performance through increased investment and development.

I am honoured to inform the Assembly that, only 18 months after its political crisis, Fiji successfully concluded the general elections and formed a multiparty Government in September 2001. My Government is confident that, with the support of the United Nations and the international community, Fiji's forward-looking policies will steer it ahead on a path of democratic rule and sustainable economic development.

Fiji acknowledges the support rendered to us by the United Nations and by Member States in the deployment of the United Nations electoral observation team during our elections. The team discharged its duties professionally and impartially. We are confident that it will provide the Assembly with a positive appraisal of the conduct of the elections as free and fair — conduct to which we have been well accustomed throughout our electoral history.

I should like to convey my Government's deep gratitude to those Member States that supported Fiji and to those that sponsored resolution 55/280, which enabled the participation of the United Nations observer team.

Our leaders are committed, under the Millennium Declaration of 2000, to the principles of human dignity, equality and equity, especially with respect to those who are most vulnerable, in particular the children, who are our future. It is a timely and constructive commitment that creates the necessary global framework for addressing the plight of the poor and the vulnerable in the face of the accelerating impact of globalization and trade liberalization.

Poverty is at the root of many problems. As the most powerful destabilizing force, it threatens democracy and good governance. It is thus our most insidious enemy. Successive *Human Development Reports* amply document abysmal accounts of poverty and poverty indicators. A total of 1.2 billion people live on less than $1 a day, more than a billion people in developing countries lack access to safe water, and more than 2.4 billion people lack adequate sanitation. We are talking not millions, but billions.

Poverty reduction is therefore our greatest challenge today. The Millennium Declaration set a target to halve global extreme poverty by 2015. This goal must be the cornerstone of all development efforts. It demands an ongoing commitment and effective measures on the part of the international community.

In this connection, my Government has created a new Ministry for Poverty Alleviation, which is a key policy factor in our triennial Strategic Development Plan. We recognize that economic, social and political stability are inextricably tied to reducing the gap between rich and poor. That equation must also recognize the unique vulnerabilities that beset the fragile economies of developing countries such as Fiji.

Complementary legislation is also being developed in the Social Justice Bill to translate into policy the constitutional provision for social equity. Primarily, the Bill will regulate affirmative action policies for disadvantaged groups in the areas and in the manner prescribed in the Fiji Constitution. This is a critical step in Fiji's efforts towards national unity and nation-building and its efforts to address issues of social, ethnic and economic development and harmony.

Today, in our journey in this world, we are meeting with unprecedented challenges and uncertainties, ranging from widespread global conflict to escalating terrorist activities and economic marginalization. The Assembly and the United Nations system must devise appropriate, creative responses to these difficult questions, in ways that are compatible with the goals of world peace and security, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Current organizational reform plans present constructive and necessary platforms for meeting these specific challenges. An amicable agreement on the expansion of the permanent or non-permanent membership of the Security Council could well present us with new and fresh avenues for solutions. My delegation reiterates our full support for an expansion of both membership categories of the Security Council. We congratulate the Security Council on the support that its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) received, a resolution whose implementation will allow for increased involvement on the part of women in the process of achieving peace and security.

Fiji has excelled in its efforts to achieve the peacekeeping goals of the United Nations Charter. We remain fully committed to this goal and to the Brahimi recommendations for reform. Our military is serving in various United Nations missions, including in Lebanon, East Timor and Kuwait. Our police officers are serving in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is gratifying to see positive conclusions to several peacekeeping mandates and their impending withdrawal or downsizing. We would caution, however, against any exit without strategy, in order to give credence to the huge investment of goodwill and resources by the United Nations and the international community, and to avoid a situation of double jeopardy for the people trapped in armed conflict.

In this regard, we support new measures to strengthen the protective regime of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. Its scope needs to include United Nations and humanitarian personnel on the ground, who need real protection and security while working to ensure the safety of, and caring for, civilians.

Fiji has consistently advocated decolonization and self-determination since joining the United Nations. We note the delay in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Fiji supports the ongoing work of the Committee of 24 and recognizes the political and diplomatic constraints involved.

Early on in this Second Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, mostly small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, need our focused attention, so that their legitimate aspirations for self-determination can be recognized.

The Declaration of Commitment on the HIV/AIDS pandemic demands that we exercise greater vigilance and focus sincerely on safeguarding our development gains and on our future goals. We in the Pacific are seeking to maintain our low infection rate trend, as we stand to lose the most if we fail to abide by that Declaration. Only collaboration and solidarity at the international, regional and national levels can save humanity from this invasive scourge.

Despite the recent political disturbances in Fiji, respect for the rule of law and for international human rights standards has been maintained. The continued existence and independence of the Fiji Human Rights Commission is testimony to our commitment to human rights.

Fiji, along with several of its Pacific Island neighbours, is for the first time facing the dilemmas posed by refugees and asylum seekers. International human trafficking has brought them to our shores, despite the vast distances between our lands. International refugees are the direct result of violations and breaches of human rights. As a State party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to its Protocol, Fiji pleads with Member States to respect the rights of refugees and to support the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the very least, Member States are obligated to protect the rights of their citizens in their own homeland.

Fiji co-sponsored the resolution on Korean peace, security and reunification during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are elated to see peace and reunification initiatives in the Korean peninsula.

Likewise, the small island developing States are seeking continually to enhance our international participation. Strengthening future relations between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum is a mutually beneficial avenue. This will allow for our effective participation in the United Nations system. It

also affords the United Nations with a unique and authentic Pacific perspective and voice. Cooperation between the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations is a welcome addition to this session's agenda and promises greater returns, with the support of Member States.

Our Pacific Islands Forum leaders will meet in Fiji in 2002. It is therefore opportune to renew our invitation to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, to visit the Pacific Islands Forum region. Recent political events in the Pacific and the successful domestic, regional and international initiatives to address these concerns can only be positively reinforced by such a high-level, goodwill visit by the Secretary-General, to take place early, rather than later, in his second term of office.

Our global development agenda demands of the United Nations an increased facilitating role in the coordination of economic, financial, trade and social issues. At the International Conference on Financing for Development in March 2002, stakeholders will deliberate on enhancing coherence and coordination between development and social objectives. Fiji hopes that the Conference will inspire the international community and financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to support and devise new standards and indicators, such as the vulnerability index, to effectively address poverty and other disparities.

Growing imbalances and marginalization in the world economy are a threat to humanity, in particular to Fiji and other small island developing States (SIDS). Sustainable development depends on a given level of resources to propel our fragile economies forward. Moreover, these resources are needed to sustain long-term, sound, economic and environmentally friendly development. The critical role of the international community is to assist us in nation-building and efficient resource utilization so that we can fulfil our social obligations.

Fiji has long expounded to the international community how vulnerable and heavily dependent our economies are on the vagaries and whims of the global economy. Our small size, extremely remote distance from the international markets and increasing susceptibility to natural disasters do not lend themselves well to economies of scale of production, to building export-based trade or to gaining competitive access to foreign markets for our products. Clearly, our ability to benefit fully from globalization is doomed from the start, further aggravating the divide between the rich and poor. It is my Government's aspiration that the scope of equitable and tangible benefits from globalization and trade liberalization is still to be fully realized if we are to meaningfully tackle global and human poverty.

As a member of the World Trade Organization, Fiji is concerned at the fast erosion of trade preferences in the world trade in agricultural products, sugar being a mainstay of our economy. Increasingly, we fear that small island States like my own, which depend predominantly on agricultural export commodities, will be seriously affected without adequate market safeguards. We are forced to question the efficacy of a multilateral trade framework as a fair mechanism in promoting the interests of SIDS like Fiji.

In this context, we welcome the current work on financing for development and preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Targeted assistance and official development assistance programmes to enable us to fully implement and strengthen investment and productivity must necessarily complement our efforts through regional or multilateral trading agreements. We are optimistic that next year's high-level conferences will flag our concerns in line with the Barbados Programme of Action and the development goals that are set out in the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: I call on Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis, Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Antigua and Barbuda is pleased that this is the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. However, we can have meaningful dialogue only if the dominant countries reach out with genuine understanding when others speak. We can have dialogue only if the basic principles of the United Nations are made the core of reality. We cannot have dialogue if multilateralism remains selective or if the principle of rotation continues to be based on demographics, military might and economic principles. The people of my country represent an integral part of human civilization and we wish to contribute our voice and our ideas to the debate on the future of the journey of humankind on this planet.

The tragic events of 11 September in the host country of the United Nations have presented a challenge to world civilization. The Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda on Thursday, 18 October, passed strong anti-terrorism legislation. Also, the Caribbean Community, meeting in special emergency session in the Bahamas on 11 and 12 October, recognized terrorism as a global problem requiring a resolute global response. The heads of Government stated:

> "We are conscious that the unprecedented and barbaric terrorist assaults of 11 September will require of us extraordinary vigilance and coordination in the future, to ensure that our territories, our institutions and our citizens are not used in any manner to facilitate the activities of terrorists or to undermine our national and regional security."

We share the agony of the United States, for we too had nationals who perished in the 11 September atrocity. We fully support Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which makes it obligatory for all States to impose far-reaching measures to combat the scourge of terrorism. We support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. International terrorism is in reality an act of war against the world's peace-loving peoples. It is imperative that all countries of the world address in a more meaningful manner the underlying social, economic and political problems that cause human misery and perpetuate injustice. We must act to ensure that the entire global society lives in an environment of freedom and is free from fear. The fight against terrorism will be a long and arduous one, but it is one in which we must thoroughly and completely engage ourselves.

Antigua and Barbuda has now ratified the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court. The citizens of my country believe that in the prospect of an international criminal court lies the promise of universal justice, since the Court will have the power to indict individuals. Antigua and Barbuda is certainly disappointed that crimes pertaining to drug trafficking and terrorism have been put on the back burner at the International Criminal Court, but we are prepared to continue our dialogue to bring them under the ambit of the Court when it becomes active. The cancer of drug trafficking will continue to threaten human civilization until we fashion a truly global response to its menace.

The battles in Seattle, Windsor and Quebec are an integral part of world civilization's struggle to humanize globalization. Interestingly, we find ourselves agreeing with the statement made by the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in his address to members of the Deutsche Bundestag on 2 April 2001 in Berlin. Mr. Köhler declared that it is political and economic madness for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to spend $360 billion a year on agricultural subsidies, while poverty rages in developing countries, especially in the rural and farming regions. He went on to say that it is high time for industrial countries to honour their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit, my own Prime Minister, Lester Bird, castigated the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for its unilaterally devised set of standards for international taxation to be imposed on other jurisdictions and for demanding that States change their domestic laws to suit OECD purposes. The rule of law has become the rule of the jungle, where rules do not apply, and only might is right. In reality, the OECD Harmful Tax Competition project has nothing to do with money laundering, but has more to do with the fact that OECD believes that its member States would lose capital to other States with more competitive tax regimes.

Globalization has left States like my own with a feeling of exclusion, a feeling of being cast aside and pushed outside, from where we observe the gains of the dominant. It is a feeling of not being able to participate in the determination of our own destiny. The "green room" process evident at World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meetings has done nothing but increase our apprehension. We call for serious reform of the global political and economic architecture to be undertaken, both at the United Nations and at the World Trade Organization. The multilateral trading system needs to be transparent. It needs to be fair and equitable, and all countries should be able to share in its benefits.

Antigua and Barbuda, as a small island State, is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. The most prevalent threat is that of hurricanes, three of which recently impacted our sister States of Belize, Cuba and the Bahamas. A single hurricane can set back the

development of a small island State by 10 years. Between 1995 and 2000, our beloved twin island State was hit by seven hurricanes.

We call on the international community to acknowledge in a meaningful way the vulnerability of small States like Antigua and Barbuda. We point to our lack of capacity in financial and human resources to bounce back from natural disasters and from external shocks to its economy caused by economic recession in the major economies of the world, which also happen to be our main trading partners. It is therefore imperative that we be able to continue to access concessionary financing through the World Bank. Our social and economic development needs, including infrastructure, seem not to register in the boardrooms of the international financial institutions.

Countries like Antigua and Barbuda are viewed as middle income because of the per capita income criterion, but this is a flawed measurement and should be abandoned. Financing for development should take into account a mix of factors and should be linked to the vulnerability index on which the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has done important work.

No account is taken of the considerable transaction costs faced by small States because of their remoteness and the disproportionate burden they bear in order to effectively participate in world trade. No account is taken of the openness of our economy to goods and services from all over the world, without corresponding market access for our own limited range of goods to the markets of Europe and North America. An inhospitable stranger known as "non-tariff barriers" continues to slam the door in our face.

In these circumstances, we cannot overemphasize how important it is for the IMF and the World Bank to apply special and differential treatment to measuring the fiscal and economic performance of small island States. Our limited capacity to raise revenue and our necessity to spend at a disproportionate level in order to maintain a decent standard of living for our people should lead the IMF to have special and differential programmes of assistance for small island States. These programmes should not merely prescribe the traditional formula of large-scale public sector dismissals and reduction of public sector investment programmes. Instead, innovative ways should be found to provide long-term financing at repayment periods and rates of interest that would allow small States to maintain democracy, human rights, low crime rates and economic growth.

My country welcomes the successful conclusion of the Marrakesh meeting on climate change, where the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change finalized the operational details of the Kyoto Protocol, thereby opening the way to widespread ratification by Governments and the Protocol's early entry into force. This was the result of several years of tough negotiation in which Antigua and Barbuda was very active and took a leadership position. What we now have in place are the institutions and detailed procedures of the Kyoto Protocol, and the next step is to test their effectiveness in overseeing the five per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries over the next decade.

The agreements reached in Marrakesh also made important progress on strengthening the flow of financial and technological support to developing countries so that they can move towards a sustainable energy future. They also send a clear signal to business, local governments and the general public that climate-friendly products, services and activities will be rewarded by consumers and national policies alike.

The meeting also adopted the Marrakesh Ministerial Declaration as an input into next September's World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg. The Declaration emphasizes the contribution that action on climate change can make to sustainable development and calls for capacity building, technology innovation and cooperation with the Biodiversity and Desertification Conventions. With the Summit a little less than a year away, small island developing States such as my own, which are among the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, continue to urge the speedy ratification of the Protocol.

That will require a global coalition among States to ensure that it enters into force and becomes legally binding after it has been ratified by at least 55 parties to the Convention, including the industrialized countries that represent at least 55 per cent of the total 1990 carbon dioxide emissions from this group. While it remains true that those with the highest per capita levels of greenhouse gas emissions should take the lead, it is incumbent upon all countries to work

together to ensure that there is full compliance with commitments contained in the Protocol.

There is a deep concern in our countries, a concern that takes on paramount proportions and that is centred around the transhipment of nuclear waste through the waters of the Caribbean Sea, and which represents a blatant disregard of our sovereignty. The countries of the Caribbean have insisted that it be stopped, but to no avail; and our populations live in constant fear of an accident. We call on those who engage in this deadly traffic to respect the rights of transit States such as Antigua and Barbuda.

The most populous democracy in the world, India, spoke on the first day of the general debate and highlighted concerns that we find it necessary to reiterate. There needs to be a more determined movement towards the liquidation of the external debts of low income and highly indebted countries. There should be poverty alleviation programmes designed for countries facing financial crises, and there should be stabilization of international prices of primary commodity exports.

The measures that we have outlined here are essential to building a just and equitable international order. Anything less would simply be the imposition of the will of the powerful upon the pusillanimous. All societies are measured by the way they treat their most vulnerable members, and the international community of nations is no different. I call on all representatives here assembled to heed the plea of the victims and to construct an international order that can lift human civilization to achieve the highest ideals of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Raynard Gideon, Chairman of the delegation of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Gideon (Marshall Islands): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands allow me to offer cordial congratulations to the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, and to offer the Marshall Islands unreserved cooperation in our deliberations at this session.

I must also express my sincere gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, whose outstanding leadership was instrumental in making the fifty-fifth session, coined the Millennium Assembly, highly successful.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands also pays tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan on his re-election to a second term as Secretary-General, as well as on winning the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, which is a very well-deserved and timely recognition of the Organization and of the Secretary-General's wisdom and dedication to the service of mankind.

It is with a heavy heart and deep sorrow that the Government of President Kessai Note and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands reiterate to the Government and people of the United States of America their deepest sympathy and condolences for the suffering and pain caused by the terrorist attacks of 11 September. Similarly, we wish to convey our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the other great nations that were directly affected by that tragic and inhuman act. They were not alone in their daily trials and tribulations; the Republic of the Marshall Islands was with them. Furthermore, we extend our solidarity and condolences to the Government and people of the Dominican Republic, who suffered losses in the recent crash of American Airlines flight 587.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands condemns all acts of terrorism. I am pleased to inform the Assembly of the ratification by the Government of the Marshall Islands of six conventions and treaties related to terrorism. They are the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages.

The marked worldwide increase in behaviours abhorrent to human dignity, freedom and basic rights of innocent people encouraged the early ratification of the Rome Statute by the Marshall Islands, which calls for the establishment of an International Criminal Court. The Republic of the Marshall Islands welcomes an early establishment of the Court and the implementation of its mandate.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands remains fully committed to the principles enshrined in the

human rights bill. The Government is currently in the process of ratifying the following conventions: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We are committed to accede to them in a timely manner.

Given the unique conditions under which we seek our livelihood, our Government has been readily supportive of new scientific breakthroughs and innovations for the betterment of the world. However, we feel there are certain scientific initiatives that run counter to human decency. In this regard, we fully associate ourselves with the call by the Governments of Germany and of France for a universal convention banning human cloning for reproductive purposes. We believe that such a scientific endeavour would directly violate the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, drawn up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 53/152. Article 11 of that Declaration specifies that

> "Practices which are contrary to human dignity, such as reproductive cloning of human beings, shall not be permitted."

As in the past, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will continue to voice in the strongest terms possible and in the best form at its disposal, its concerns and fears over issues relating to climate change and rising sea levels. The Assembly is aware that several Pacific island countries are represented in this Organization. Like other small island countries, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is plagued by a unique set of problems. Our coastal zones have become highly vulnerable to erosion, our groundwater systems are affected by high levels of saltwater intrusion, and increasing salinity is having a direct impact on our subsistence cropping. Such vulnerabilities, together with prolonged drought, constitute a deadly peril for our health and survival.

We welcome the successful outcome of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which recently concluded in Marrakesh. The Kyoto Protocol is the best available solution to address our environmental concerns. We should be able to look back in the coming days and commend ourselves for the mission that is to be accomplished. We owe it to our children and to our children's children.

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by heads of State or Government during the Millennium Assembly, should serve as our guiding framework and road map for achieving sustainable development, eradicating poverty, combating HIV/AIDS, preventing illegal trafficking in small arms and safeguarding the environment.

Immediately following the Millennium Assembly, President Kessai H. Note convened a broad-based economic and social summit, the outcome of which was the development of a national planning vision — a guiding framework for a long-term national development programme. I commend Member States for their generous support and assistance for this initiative.

The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands is of the view that the United Nations must move forward proactively in its reform process. We commend the Secretary-General for his reform programme. However, much more needs to be done. We encourage the Fifth Committee and United Nations funds and programmes to support and cooperate in the reform process.

The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands fully supports the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, based on equity, to include developed and developing countries so as to respond to the realities and challenges of our contemporary world. We note that certain issues need to be agreed on. We should move forward with broad-based agreement and revisit our differences.

Now that this Organization has 189 Member States, 14 of them being from the Pacific region, the reconfiguration of our electoral groupings should be an additional matter to be placed on the table. It may be a complex issue, but through our collective efforts and inspiration, the goal can be achieved, and it should be considered without further delay.

The exclusion from this body and its related agencies of the Republic of China on Taiwan is a major, serious hindrance to the Government of the

Republic of China on Taiwan in its pursuit of its fundamental rights to participate in international dialogue and regional organizations and activities. The time has come once again to reconsider the exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan from this prestigious body. There is so much that the Republic of China on Taiwan could do, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in the areas of sustainable development, technology, health, peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, the Republic of the Marshall Islands pledges its commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Claude Morel, Chairman of the delegation of Seychelles.

Mr. Morel (Seychelles): My delegation would like to congratulate Mr. Han on his dynamic stewardship of the deliberations of the General Assembly at this session. Our felicitations also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations on being honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The brutal and tragic events that took place in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania on 11 September were the result of acts against not only the United States, but the international community at large.

In his message of condolence to President George W. Bush, the President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. France Albert René, condemned the terrorist attacks in the strongest terms, stating

> "Our global village cannot tolerate such acts that disrespect the value of human life and jeopardize world peace and stability."

The subsequent military action in Afghanistan was understood, in principle, by the Seychelles Government as being in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an interview with the local media, referred to this military action as "self-defence", and expressed the wish that only the terrorist networks and their clearly identified allies would be targeted, as part of a carefully proportioned action plan, sparing civilian populations and avoiding any kind of linkage between religious faiths and ideologically based deviation.

The Seychelles Government agrees with the following principles. Terrorism is a threat to international peace and security. There is no political or religious justification for such violence. We vigorously condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Further to the events of 11 September, Seychelles recognizes the right of the United States Government to react under guiding principles of international law and to bring the perpetrators to justice. But there is also a need to acknowledge the root causes of terrorism, including extreme poverty, despair and injustice, and to strongly advocate concerted efforts and collective commitment throughout the world to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment. Based on those principles and concerns, the position of my Government does not diverge from the views and recommendations expressed by the international community.

We appreciate the authority of the United Nations in providing global legitimacy for a universal response against terrorism. The war on terrorism must be fought on many fronts. The elaboration of a broad, long-term strategy for combating international terrorism, including military, political, diplomatic, legal and economic means, is of paramount importance.

Seychelles welcomes Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001, which outlines clear steps and measures that all United Nations Member States must now implement in order to prevent and suppress terrorist activities. My country is fully committed to implementing the provisions of the resolution, despite being handicapped by the constraints linked to lack of capacities and resources.

Seychelles is a party to six of the 12 existing United Nations conventions and protocols on terrorism. My Government is taking steps to accede to the remaining six. Furthermore, we have also decided to accede to the 1999 Organization of African Unity Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism.

Seychelles fully supports the ongoing negotiations to elaborate a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. We commend the personal intervention of Secretary-General Annan in trying to bridge differences and achieve consensus. It is our hope that, despite the complex and sensitive nature of the issues being addressed, the international community will arrive at an agreement very soon.

Bearing in mind the unprecedented international mobilization against terrorism and the magnitude of the

present situation, we consider that the larger, influential Members of the United Nations, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, should manifest their strong political will and backing in resolving regional conflicts in all parts of the globe. Above all, they must intensify their efforts to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East. Let us not underestimate the fact that regional conflicts are often breeding grounds for terrorism.

It was mentioned earlier that terrorism is rooted in poverty. The United Nations must engage its full potential to vigorously pursue its development agenda. This should comprise, inter alia, the drive for the alleviation of poverty and achieving sustainable development, the quest for equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization, and the achievement of the Millennium Summit goals, as well as the success of next year's International Conference on Financing for Development and World Summit on Sustainable Development.

As a small island State whose economy depends mainly on tourism and related industries, Seychelles' vulnerability is obviously at issue should the ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan persist. As a peaceful community enjoying stability and social harmony, Seychelles, without questioning its strong moral support for the cause of international security, also encourages a dialogue giving the voices of reason and compassion a chance to be heard, especially with regard to the needs of the Afghan people, who have lived three decades of war, resulting in the suffering of very large numbers of refugees and displaced persons.

Finally, my country would like to lay stress on the urgency for the United Nations to rethink the world order, not just in terms of geopolitical balance, but in terms of a new ethic. International terrorism cannot be fought by way of offensive weapons, either traditional or sophisticated. To agree on a common value system is, in the middle and long terms, a more profitable orientation for the whole of humanity.

This being said, my country renews its adhesion to the international coalition of nations that are united in the war on international terrorism and in the quest for worldwide peace and security.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sonatane Tua Taumoepeau Tupou, Chairman of the delegation of Tonga.

Mr. Tupou (Tonga): In congratulating Mr. Han Seung-soo upon his assumption of high office, I must also praise his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for an outstanding tenure as the President who ushered in the new millennium. If the Millennium Summit and its Declaration could be considered the hallmark of Mr. Holkeri's presidency, then Mr. Han's already has one of equally impressive terms with the Organization and its Secretary-General being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Therefore, the re-election of Mr. Kofi Annan for a second term as Secretary-General is sure testament not only to his own personal dedication, creative leadership and unwavering sense of spirit, but also to the vision and faith of the Organization's Member States.

I take this occasion to offer Tonga's solace to all affected delegations, and in particular the delegations of the Dominican Republic and the United States, for whom the tragedy that befell their communities on 12 November has such a profound bearing.

Like other Member States, Tonga takes this occasion to express our sympathy and condolences to the President and people of the United States for the suffering and loss of life incurred during the attacks of 11 September. In doing so, Tonga condemns in the strongest possible terms these acts of terror, which remain without moral or lawful justification.

The events of 11 September have focused our Organization's attention on terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and, more importantly, on the need to address this issue comprehensively. As such, Tonga commends the timely and decisive action taken by the Security Council with respect to the events of 11 September. In doing so, we fully support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its mandated efforts to combat terrorism.

It has been stated that terrorism offends the core values of our Organization, and that is true. The irony is that, inasmuch as the events of 11 September were an affront to one's sense of humanity, it is this very humanity that has risen to prevail over extreme adversity. If last year's catchphrase during the Millennium Summit was "We, the peoples", that call is all the more pertinent this year in our collective efforts to combat terrorism.

As part of its contribution to these efforts, Tonga is taking steps to carefully study and consider the United Nations conventions on terrorism that it is not

party to. However, merely becoming parties to conventions will not be sufficient. Concrete steps will be needed if small countries like ours are to fully and meaningfully take part in these efforts.

For example, Tonga's efforts to develop, implement and maintain counter-terrorism measures will require sustained financial and expert technical assistance on a solid foundation of a network of information exchange between relevant law enforcement and aviation agencies. In this regard, our efforts in combating terrorism will be but a microcosm for addressing a wider plethora of development issues.

As much as the Millennium Declaration concerned new commitments, or renewed commitments in some instances, Tonga commends the report of the Secretary-General for its innovation and detailed description as to how implementation of the Declaration might be taken forward.

We look towards the International Conference on Financing for Development as a further opportunity to pursue a wide range of crucial thematic issues which are particularly critical to the development aspirations of developing countries. The balance required for forging consensus on these thematic issues is as important as the balance between official development assistance and the mobilization of limited domestic resources.

While the Declaration of the recently concluded World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Doha might give rise to optimism, Tonga seeks a simplified, streamlined and expeditious accession process for small island developing States like ours who wish to join the WTO. In this regard, we congratulate the People's Republic of China upon its entry into the organization. A more flexible approach and time frame within which to meet obligations are needed to enable countries like Tonga to adopt measures so as to fully participate in the WTO system and to fulfil the obligations of the WTO agreements while minimizing any adverse impacts upon our populace. Such an accession process can be achieved only with continuing technical and financial assistance.

We further look towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a complementary step in the development path towards the reinvigoration of targeted commitments to sustainable development — especially those concerning small island developing States — as contained in Agenda 21. We continue to call on the international community for refocused commitment to and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Tonga's preparations for this Summit, through its national assessment report, will include identifying areas for specific and priority capacity-building needs as well as avenues by which to take greater advantage of financial and technological support.

While Tonga recognizes the merit of the economic vulnerability index as a measure for economic impacts, its application should encompass all small island developing States and not serve as a means to draw superficial differences between them. After all, the economic vulnerability index is an accurate reflection of the true realities of small island developing States, and if those realities are not fully addressed, we shall continue to perch precariously on the edge of the precipice. Therefore, we continue to support the development of an appropriate environmental vulnerability index, and we commend the work of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission in this regard. We believe that such an index will provide accurate indicators of factors to which small islands are vulnerable, such as natural disasters, sea-level rise and climate change. Tonga therefore welcomes the consensus reached at Marrakech at the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the further opportunities for progress that it presents.

As a developing ocean State, we continue to seek our fair share of the harvest from the ocean which bounds us on all sides. We welcome in particular the preparations for making effective the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. We urge the distant water fishing nations in our region with a real interest in fisheries to make every effort to become party to a convention that is the hallmark of our commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of a critically important resource. Tonga continues to value the work and decisions this year at the eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea — UNICPOLOS.

We continue to view information and communication technologies as the way to go, and we

are making our own efforts to bridge the digital divide to take full advantage of the digital revolution. Maximizing such efforts will require complementary efforts in tandem with the international community and the United Nations. We urge continued support for the Small Islands Developing States Network, SIDSnet, and efforts to strengthen its capacity to support and assist small island developing States.

Tonga welcomes the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the establishment of the global fund to combat this scourge. We look forward to the implementation of the Declaration and commend those Member States who have pledged their financial support to the fund.

We continue to support the effort to reform the Security Council. In this regard, as was presented by a delegation during the debate on Security Council reform, we could support either proposal for an expansion of the number of permanent seats: by two, with an expansion of the number of non-permanent seats by three, or, alternatively, by three, with the number of non-permanent seats increased by four. While cognizant that issues pertaining to the veto and its exercise in such an expansion would continue to demand handling with the utmost sensitivity and care, we urge that where there are issues of convergence, steps should be taken to consolidate such convergence, and where unresolved issues remain, that these be the focus of continuing dialogue and discussion.

Finally, with respect to pertinent regional issues in the Pacific, Tonga endorses the views expressed in the Nauru communiqué, now contained in document A/56/388, which was the outcome of the annual meeting of Pacific Island Forum leaders at Nauru in August this year.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Clifford Sibusiso Mamba, Chairman of the delegation of Swaziland.

Mr. Mamba (Swaziland): It is an honour and privilege for me to deliver this statement on behalf of His Majesty King Mswati III. I wish to convey the greetings and warm wishes of His Majesty, Her Majesty The Queen Mother, Ndlovukazi, the Government and the entire Swazi nation to all our friends and fellow Members of the United Nations.

The Kingdom of Swaziland offers her warmest congratulations to the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We are confident that with his proven abilities and leadership, he will guide us to success in our deliberations at this time of crisis in global affairs.

Allow me to express our appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, of Finland, who, by his astute and judicious leadership, brought to a successful conclusion the work of the fifty-fifth session.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would further like to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for leading our Organization so effectively through his tenure thus far. We will continue to depend on his highly developed sense of diplomacy and his undoubted commitment to achieve global peace, stability and equitable development. The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to both the Secretary-General and the United Nations attests to the aforementioned attributes.

We are also grateful for the continuing dedication and hard work of the staff of the United Nations, whose efforts are needed all the more in these challenging times. In this regard, we call upon all our fellow Members to demonstrate their support for the Secretary-General and his staff by honouring their financial obligations, so that our Organization can have sufficient resources with which to meet the widening scope of its activities.

We are meeting one year after the historic gathering of world leaders, when the international community sought to redefine and articulate a common vision for the future of all its citizens. The goals to be achieved were clearly set out in the Millennium Declaration as an outcome of the Millennium Summit. Today we have the opportunity — indeed, the responsibility — to evaluate just how far we have come in that mission which we set for ourselves through this Organization. We need to address honestly our shortcomings in commitment and action and to further devise practical and realistic strategies that will result in measurable progress in areas identified for urgent action.

The Kingdom of Swaziland therefore believes that the promotion of sustainable international peace and security must be one of the main priorities of the United Nations, because it is clear that our collective aim of raising the living standard of our peoples is

possible only in conditions of global stability and with nations living harmoniously alongside one another.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joined the rest of the world in condemnation of the tragic terrorist attacks of 11 September, to which the international community must respond because such acts are an assault on human decency and humanity. These acts cannot be justified under any circumstances. The Kingdom of Swaziland repudiates such acts and aligns itself with all peace-loving people around the world not only in condemning such acts, but also in calling for their complete eradication. To that end, the Kingdom of Swaziland will do all in its power to prevent acts of terrorism and to ensure that the support and financing of terrorism cannot take root on Swazi soil. We once more offer our sympathy and prayers to the families and friends of those who lost their lives in the tragedy.

Future global stability is threatened by the spread of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the unabated proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Vigorous and urgent efforts are needed to eliminate these weapons. In this regard, we welcome the successful conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We deem their outcomes timely and necessary.

While much has been done through the process of reform effected by the Secretary-General, it is also recognized that there has been very little progress made so far by the Open-ended Working Group to address the most important aspect of the reform: the restructuring of the Security Council. More intensified efforts should be made to bring to a conclusion the deliberations on this issue, and we look forward to the leadership of the President of the General Assembly in advancing negotiations towards a lasting solution. The Kingdom of Swaziland is still committed to the process of the reform for the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of its membership. In that regard, we continue to support the African position in favour of two permanent seats and three non-permanent seats being allocated to the African continent.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the United Nations, in conjunction with regional organizations, must take on a more proactive role in preventive diplomacy to head off potentially explosive situations. We need an effective early warning capability to deal with emerging conflicts and much closer collaboration between the Security Council and the Office of the Secretary-General in our efforts to meet security challenges wherever they may occur.

At this time, our Organization is understandably focused on global security. The crisis in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is a component of the overall challenge and continues to pose a significant threat to security in both the Middle East and the wider world at large. The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the only solution to the continuing instability in that region is through peaceful dialogue and a return to the spirit of compromise and understanding that has characterized the relationship between the two sides in the past. We commend the efforts of all who are trying to bring lasting, sustainable peace to the Middle East, and we offer our encouragement and support for the achievement of this goal.

On the African continent, security challenges continue to cause suffering and restrict the development of many millions of our people. While this is undeniable, it is also clear that Africa itself is taking on the responsibility to find solutions to the crises affecting a number of its nations. The peace processes in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea and Angola all have benefited from the involvement of our regional and subregional groupings and from the efforts of dedicated African men and women. The Kingdom of Swaziland supports unequivocally these efforts, and we join our fellow African Member States in calling for continued and enhanced support from the United Nations and individual countries and for commitments in word to be followed up by action.

In developmental terms, there is a new wind blowing through all the African countries, bringing fresh hope to our peoples for improved standards of living and the removal of the burdens of the past. A series of historic agreements by all African countries indicates a new era of optimism for the continent, as well as the start of a new relationship with the rest of the world. The continent will no longer tolerate the notion of unconstitutional Governments, and we have all confirmed our belief that transparency and accountability are the watchwords of governance that places people at the centre of development.

We also believe that trade with the rest of the world is the lifeblood of our developing economies, encouraging the creation of businesses and inward and local investment and increasing employment. We therefore commend those countries and trading blocs that recognize the importance to Africa of freeing up their markets for our goods and services and encourage others to follow suit.

The birth of the African Union is a signal to the rest of the world that Africa means business and is ready to back up its words with action. The New African Initiative proposes a partnership that is based on support for an Africa that recognizes and accepts its responsibilities from a world that understands our priorities for development. We commend the initiative to those who are in a position to help Africa emerge from the disappointments of the past into a prosperous and secure future.

We are on the edge of a global recession, and its effects will be felt hardest among those of us in the developing world. After a decade of encouraging talk of the benefits of globalization, we are discovering the hard truth: that we are nowhere near the stage of being able to gain advantage from a world of liberalized trade. This must now surely be plain for anyone to see.

Globalization in its unfettered form is likely to do more harm than good to the small, vulnerable economies unless measures are put in place to protect them in the short to medium term. There must be agreed ground rules to regulate the conduct of free trade in goods and services to ensure an equitable exchange between unequal partners.

Considering the intrinsic link between peace, security and development, the United Nations has an even bigger responsibility to increase its efforts to secure resources to finance development, especially for those of us most at risk in these times of economic uncertainty. We believe it is the responsibility of the wider international community to continue to provide resources to assist developing countries to fight their way out of poverty.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to develop confidently and peacefully, according to the wishes of its people. Our review of the Constitution was completed earlier this year, and the recommendations of the people will now be drafted into a legal document for final approval by the Swazi nation next year. This vital nation-building process will result in a Constitution that is based entirely on the wishes of the people themselves, and we are confident that it will serve the best interests of the Kingdom for many generations to come.

Poverty alleviation remains the top priority for the Kingdom, and we continue to make great efforts to achieve this aim through a series of economic measures, such as investment attraction, increased trade and the stimulation of local entrepreneurship. We are embarking on an ambitious programme to maximize the potential of our tourism and industry sectors, and in this we need the support of the international financial institutions, as well as the United Nations Development Programme.

Despite our best efforts, and in common with all developing countries, the Kingdom is finding progress difficult to achieve in the face of huge obstacles, with the greatest undoubtedly being the threat to our future posed by the HIV/AIDS crisis. During the United Nations special session on HIV/AIDS held here in June, we made clear the scale of the disaster facing our nation. There is no doubt that the spread of HIV among the population represents our greatest development challenge, and we are working hard in a combined, national effort to overcome the devastating effects of the pandemic.

However, we cannot do this alone. We need substantial support to implement our strategy of education, prevention, care and counselling. Finances, drugs, expertise and guidance are all urgently required. The very survival of our nation is at stake, and we appeal once more to the United Nations and to the international community at large not to abandon us at this moment of supreme necessity.

It could be said that there has been an inauspicious start to the twenty-first century, with the globalization of terrorism and the reality of a global economic recession at the forefront of our minds. This places all the more responsibility on the United Nations to harness the resources and commitment of the citizens of the world for the benefit of humankind. In this regard, there is a compelling need to include all peoples of the world, as envisaged by our founding fathers and as enshrined in the principle of universality.

Acknowledging the importance of this principle, the Kingdom of Swaziland raises once more the question of the inclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations and its

associated agencies. We appeal on behalf of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan for their right to representation in the United Nations Organization. The Government and people of the Republic of China on Taiwan have shown themselves to be wholly committed to observing the principles and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Charter of the United Nations.

In addition to the peaceful democratic transition that took place last year, the recent admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the World Trade Organization attests to the significant contribution the Republic of China has made and will continue to make to international trade. The Republic of China on Taiwan has shown time and again its willingness to participate in efforts to bring about true global peace, development and security, and its commitment to utilize its resources for the benefit of mankind.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has been at the forefront of efforts to support the readmittance of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United Nations. Our position on this important issue remains unchanged. We therefore appeal to our fellow Members to support the establishment of a working group to examine in detail the exceptional international situation relating to the Republic of China on Taiwan, with a view to ensuring that its 23 million people can contribute actively to the international community through participation in the United Nations and its related agencies.

At the Millennium Summit, we the Member States of the United Nations agreed to seize the opportunity to forge a new era of optimism for the world, based on equality, peace and prosperity. That opportunity is fading fast, and we need to redouble our efforts and determination to make that vision a reality. The Kingdom of Swaziland renews its commitment to the Charter and aims of the United Nations and offers to its fellow Members assurances of continued support for all activities that will help the world to achieve a better future for all its peoples.

The President in the Chair

Programme of work

The President: On Wednesday, 21 November 2001, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up sub-item (d) of agenda item 16, "Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: Election of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme" as the second item for that morning.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.